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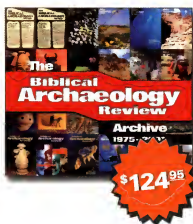
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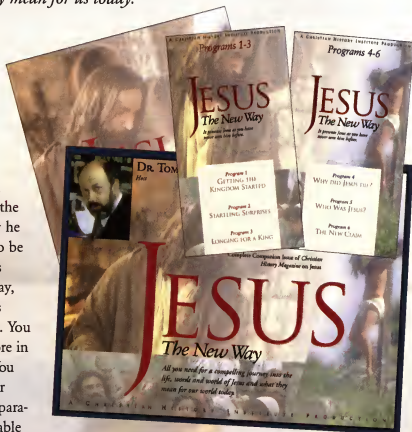
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# Biblical Archaeology Review

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## Assessing the Jehoash Inscription

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No sooner did an inscription purporting to describe repairs to the Jerusalem Temple come to light than scholars began to question its authenticity. Two such scholars explain why they have concluded the inscription is a fraud.

## Mounds of Mystery

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*Gabriel Barkay*

For more than a century, archaeologists have been puzzled by a score of odd mounds to the west of ancient Jerusalem. But thanks to Biblical passages and similar structures in Cyprus, our author finally solves the mystery.

## Real or Fake?

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*Hershel Shanks, Robert Stieglitz and Bernhard Lang*

Two inscribed potsherds—one of them an apparent receipt from the Jerusalem Temple—are at the center of a scholarly controversy over their authenticity. We lay out both sides of the case and also explain how the wording on one of the sherds casts light on the language in the Ten Commandments.

## Spending Your Way Through Jewish History

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*Sandy Brenner*

Coins are not just for spending: They tell fascinating stories and contain a wealth of historical information, as this survey of ten coins illustrates.

## The Mistress of Stratigraphy Had Clay Feet

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*Hershel Shanks*

Kathleen Kenyon, excavator of Jerusalem and Jericho, has enjoyed a stellar reputation as a meticulous archaeologist. But with the publication of her work in Jerusalem, that reputation will be tarnished.



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*Royal mounds*



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*Mini history*



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Nimrud, Iraq

ON THE COVER: This 9-by-11-inch black sandstone plaque, brought to light in recent months, is either one of the most significant Bible-related artifacts ever found or a highly sophisticated fraud. Added to its mysterious aura is the fact that no one knows when and where it was found or even who owns it, and just recently it was cracked when taken into custody by police in Israel. The plaque's 15-line inscription purports to describe renovations to the Jerusalem Temple by King Jehoash of Judah (835-801 B.C.), and its language closely mirrors passages in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. Many leading linguists and paleographers (specialists in ancient inscriptions) are convinced the text is a forgery, but specialists who have examined the slab say the writing is ancient. They point to the stone's patina—a microscopic film that takes centuries to develop—as proof. Others counter that patina can be faked. But if that's true, let's see someone do it, writes BAR editor Hershel Shanks, in "Create a Fake and Win \$10,000," p. 6. Full content rules appear on p. 31, and two related articles, under the heading "Assessing the Jehoash Inscription," start on p. 26. Photo by Associated Press.

### A Note on Style

B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era), used by some of our authors, are the alternative designations for B.C. and A.D. often used in scholarly literature.

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A close-up of Numbers 28:15-22, with a silver pointer known as a yod or hand.

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## First Person



Many have claimed they could make an inscription look ancient; let's see if they can fool the experts.

### Create a Fake and Win \$10,000 Biblical Archaeology Society announces new competition

BAR's Create a Fake contest—with a \$10,000 prize (see page 31)—will bring the controversial issue of forgery detection from the realm of theory to reality.

The occasion is one of the most explosive debates in the history of Biblical archaeology: Is the recently surfaced Jehoash Inscription authentic or a fake? World-class linguists and paleographers (experts in the development of ancient Semitic script) are absolutely confident that it is a fake (see the articles on pages 27 and 28 for their reasons). Three leading geologists with the Geological Survey of Israel who studied the patina on the inscription are just as confident that it is authentic.

Patina is a film that develops on stone (or other materials like clay or metal) over hundreds, or thousands, of years. It is often described as an encrustation or coating, or simply weathering. Can modern forgers with

sophisticated techniques create patina that would get past the equally sophisticated detection methods of expert geologists?

It would be difficult to imagine a more important case study than the Jehoash Inscription. If it is authentic, it would be the first royal Israelite inscription ever discovered. Jehoash (also called Joash, Yehoash and Yoash) was king of Judah from about 835 to 801 B.C.E.

The 15-line inscription, engraved on a 9 x 11-inch black sandstone plaque, memorializes contributions of silver for repairs to Solomon's Temple, then already more than a hundred years old. The beginning part of the plaque has not survived, and King Jehoash's name does not actually appear. The first surviving word is "Ahaziah," but even that is missing the first letter. Ahaziah was Jehoash's father, so it is assumed that the missing first line reads "Jehoash son of Ahaziah." Hence, the text has become known as the Jehoash Inscription.

The inscription closely parallels a passage in the Bible (2 Kings 12) that describes how Jehoash collected money to repair the Temple. If the inscription is authentic, it would be powerful evidence against the so-called Biblical minimalists, who deny any historicity to the Bible's account.

The inscription is also embroiled in Middle Eastern politics. Yasser Arafat claims there never was a Solomonic Temple (or First Temple) on the Temple Mount, which the Arabs call Haram esh-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary). This inscription would seem to refute that claim. But, even more explosive, if the inscription is authentic, it probably came from the illegal Arab excavation of the Temple Mount, in which the Waqf, the Muslim religious trust responsible for the site, dug with a bulldozer and dumped the debris in the adjacent Kidron Valley.\*

\*See Suzanne Singer, "More Temple Mount Antiquities Destroyed," BAR, September/October 2000 and Hershel Shanks, "How We Lost the Temple Mount," *Moment*, June 2002.



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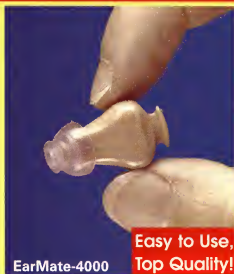
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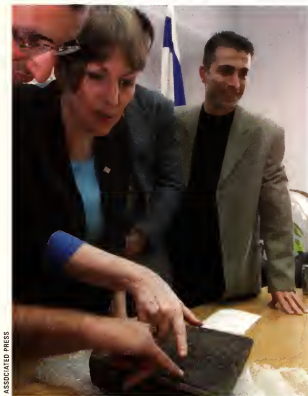
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ISRAEL EDUCATION MINISTER Limor Livnat (center) examines the Jehoash Inscription soon after it cracked.

The Jehoash Inscription was initially shown to Israel's leading paleographer, Joseph Naveh, by an unidentified Arab and Jew. The owner was at one time represented by a leading Jerusalem lawyer, Isaac Herzog, who is now a member of Israel's parliament, the Knesset. He has since resigned from the representation and the owner has a new lawyer. The inscription was deposited with the Israel Museum for over a year and a half while the museum's experts studied it—inconclusively. (The museum will not discuss the matter.) It was then deposited with the Geological Survey of Israel, where three geologists (Shimon Ilani, Amnon Rosenfeld and Michael Dvorachek) studied the inscription and concluded that it is authentic. An extensive account of their work has been published in *GSI Current Research* (vol. 13, pp. 109–116).

One of their startling finds is that the patina on the inscription contains not only particles of carbon but also tiny globules of pure gold, averaging one micron in size (a millionth of a meter). The particles of carbon were subjected to carbon 14 analysis in a Florida laboratory, which concluded, with 95 percent certainty, that the particles dated from 400 to 200 B.C.E.

The implications of the gold globules are

little short of astounding. According to the Bible (1 Kings 6:14–22), some walls of the Temple were overlaid with gold. The Temple was burned and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. If the plaque with the inscription hung in the Temple, the globules of pure gold could have gotten into the patina (that formed thereafter) from the gold that was burned during the Babylonian destruction!

Could this patina have been applied by a modern forger? Could he (or she) create this patina in a way that would fool an expert?

In the endless bull sessions in which archaeologists engage, it is often confidently asserted that it is easy to fake patina. Just bury the inscription in salt water for a while. Or bury it in the ground. Among the manuscripts we have recently received at BAR is one by Jeff

Chadwick of Brigham Young University in Utah, who asserts that "sophisticated handlers of illicit antiquities in Israel ... know how to make recently made oil lamps look realistic by burying them in soft, moist earth for several months, which colors the clay with earth stains and even begins the chemical reactions that eventually form patina. The same trick works with stone artifacts, *except quicker*" (my italics).

Even more recently, Baruch Halpern of Pennsylvania State University, who is co-director of the excavations at Megiddo, stated, "Forging patina is not a difficult thing ... You could do it in a couple of hours."

A leading petrologist from Tel Aviv University, Yuval Goren, has gone Chadwick and Halpern one better. Goren has actually created patina on a stone that is similar to the Jehoash stone and engraved with three Hebrew letters (the word for "king"). His study is published on the Web (at [www.bibleinterp.com/articles/alternative\\_interpretation.htm](http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/alternative_interpretation.htm)); a slightly revised version will appear in the journal *Tel Aviv*. According to Goren, "An experienced artifact faker can sometimes fool the best experts ... True patina can be created in the laboratory by various methods."

Goren first "easily carved [his inscription] on a pre-polished surface of the rock using

iron tools that leave no traces of nickel, chromium, etc." The inscription was then "aged" by blowing fine quartz ... on the surface using an airbrush system. This creates a surface that looks 'weathered' and 'old' even under the binocular stereomicroscope."

Goren then created the patina by "crushing another fragment of the same rock in an agate mortar (to prevent contamination) and in an ultrasonic bath (to disaggregate the stone), then producing a watery solution of the powder ... The pasty solution of the ground rock is used for carefully coating the entire surface, including the inscription, and then let dry. Due to the clay contents, it can be hardened to some extent by gradual heating in an electric kiln ... The 'patina' may be 'aged' even more by exposing it to microwaves which would result in the appearance of minute cracks and grooves within it." Gold traces can be "sprayed over the tablet using a gas burner. This will create micron-sized globules that will not be seen by the naked eye. Another possible way to fool the scientists would be to 'plant' in the cracks and the grooves Iron Age II charcoal from an archaeological site, which can be easily obtained in any Near Eastern department of archaeology."

*Voilà!* This then would produce, according to Goren, "exactly the same analytical results" as were obtained by the geologists at Israel's Geological Survey.

However, a scientist at the Geological Survey told me that if a student of Goren's had turned in this paper to the professor, the student would have received an F.

Another problem: Goren says that he could detect the result as a forgery if we assume, as appears to be the case with the Jehoash Inscription, that it was buried somewhere in Jerusalem. Neither the patina Goren created—nor the patina on the Jehoash Inscription—contains any elements from a Jerusalem "depositional environment." The Jehoash Inscription and the fake Goren created contain only chemical elements found in the stone. For Goren, this makes it "unlikely" that the Jehoash Inscription is genuine. Moreover, Goren says that there is another way he could tell a forgery (and specifically whether the Jehoash Inscription is a forgery) by a proper examination. This would involve examination of a minute cross-section (so small it is "almost invisible to the naked eye") of the patina on the Jehoash Inscription to determine its "microlaminar structure."

Another interesting situation: The Getty Museum in Los Angeles purchased a now-famous Greek statue of a young man,

*continues on page 68*

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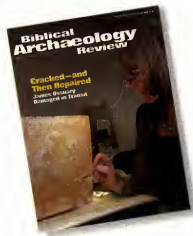


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The shoddy work of the company that packed the James ossuary incurs the contempt of our readers.

### Our Own Charlton Neston

Cancel my subscription? I'll give up *Bible Review* and BAR when they pry them out of my cold dead fingers.

Bill Young  
Lynchburg, Virginia

### Skip the Personalities

I'm sorry to say that your magazine has become less and less of a resource for me. I don't want to be negative, since you guys have always worked very hard to produce a quality magazine.

I would have more articles on archaeology and fewer articles on archaeologists. We are fascinated by the finds but archaeologists tend not to be as exciting as their work.

Daniel Hoskins  
Redmond, Oregon



## James Bone Box

### Incompetent Shippers

I read with shock and growing disbelief of the damage sustained in shipment to the Royal Ontario Museum of the reputed ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus ("Cracks in James Bone Box Repaired," January/February 2003). The pictures on pages 21 and 22 of the packaging that the

shipping company provided for this priceless artifact would have been laughable if they weren't so sad: bubble wrap encasing the fragile stone coffin, enclosed in a cardboard box, to ship it air freight (why not via tramp steamer?) to Toronto. I hope the name of the shipper, Atlas/Peltransport Ltd., is remembered in infamy and is soon found in the bankruptcy proceedings that it so richly deserves.

David Kase  
Palos Verdes Estates, California

### Packing Advice from a Ceramacist ...

With considerable experience, both disastrous and successful, shipping my ceramic work to exhibitions, I was appalled when I saw the photograph of the cracked bone box! How could any reputable shipping company pack a significant archaeological treasure with layers of bubble wrap with no cushion between the object and the cardboard box?

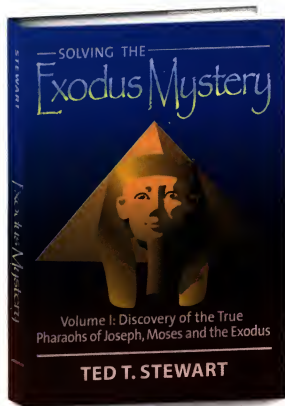
Standard minimal acceptable packing for fragile objects by American shippers is bubble wrap or blown molded styrofoam around the piece with a minimum 2-inch cushioning material between the wrapped object and the box, plus enclosure of the box in a second box with another minimum 2-inch cushioning material between the boxes.

If I had shipped the ossuary, I would have not only followed the above packing guidelines, but the second box would have been a wood crate built specifically for the shipment.

Thanks for your magazine and its coverage of the ossuary. I particularly like your enthusiasm.

Jean Waldberg  
Miami, Florida





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## EVALUATIONS OF *SOLVING THE EXODUS MYSTERY*, VOL. I

"Ted Stewart's *Solving the Exodus Mystery* provides the reader with a preponderance of internal evidence which I find totally convincing. Stewart has sifted through every shred of evidence available in a very careful and exhaustive manner. It will be difficult for the professional Egyptologist to dismiss Stewart's conclusions without considering them carefully." **Peter C. Patton, Ph.D., Professor, St. Thomas University, St. Paul, Minnesota and former Director of Ancient Studies, University of Minnesota.**

"Solving the Exodus Mystery is probably the most valuable book on Biblical archeology that I own. Using materials largely available to most people, Ted Stewart shows that archeological data revises the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty 300 years later than the dates of Egyptologists. Stewart's "new" dating almost exactly matches the Carbon-14 dates from known Twelfth-Dynasty tombs. Stewart has identified 436 synchronisms that join archeology and the Bible in an incredible harmony. This book should be in the library of every Bible student and every student of the archeology of Bible lands." **Dwayne Shafer, M.D., (Physician in Stephenville, Texas), and a Ph.D. in Theology with emphasis in Apologetics.**

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### ... And from an Antiques Dealer

Holy bejeezers! I couldn't believe they busted Uncle Jim's bone box. As an antiques dealer, I ship 10-15 pieces of pottery and glass every day. On average, I have about one breakage a year in shipping—always from something the shipper does. When I look at the photo of how the bone box was packed, I can't believe it. Layers of bubble wrap wound tightly around a large, heavy, hollow object in a cardboard box not large enough to create a sufficient barrier between the wrapped object and the sidewall of the box—well, duh—what do you think is going to happen? There is no way the bubble wrap and the cardboard up against the wrap is going to protect a heavy object from shock due to a forceful drop or shove. The weight of the object will act against itself—especially if it's tightly wrapped. The same goes with sharp temperature fluctuations—tight plastic wrapping will only enhance the stress that temperature fluctuation imposes. They needed a bigger box. And they needed to think of the box not as holding the object, but rather as holding a well-thought-out structure of protection in and around the bone box.

Dan Johnson  
Mt. Gilead, Ohio

### Bubble Wrap Cracked the Box

I believe that it was the bubble wrap that damaged the ossuary. The photo on page 22 shows bubble wrap inside the box. When this went up in the plane (to 30,000 feet) the pressure in the bubbles was 14.7 pounds per square inch (psi), which is the sea level pressure where the bubbles were made and the box was packed, while the pressure on the outside was much less (8 or 9 psi even if the box was in the pressurized part of the plane). This difference caused the bubble wrap to expand inside the box and to break it.

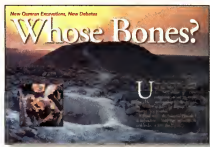
Even a few psi difference over a large surface, such as the side of the box, creates a very large force, certainly enough to cause the damage shown. The bubble wrap basically blew up the box as the plane ascended.

Brian Rex  
Brigham City, Utah

## Whose Bones?

### More on the Qumran Graves

I would like to congratulate Magen Broshi and Hanan Eshel for their careful work and their fine article about the mourning enclosure in the Qumran cemetery



("Whose Bones?" January/February 2003). Additionally, with Richard Freund, their mapping of the cemetery is excellent and very valuable. There is just one small point I would like to query: They note that the "54 tombs in which the burials were east-west all proved to be Bedouin burials from about the last few centuries." In fact, this is not proven. The proposal that all east-west burials were Bedouin comes from Joe Zias ("The Cemeteries of Qumran and Celibacy: Confusion Laid to Rest?" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7 [2000], pp. 220-253), but not all Qumran archaeologists and osteologists are convinced by Zias's argument, and few of these east-west burials have in fact been excavated.

Zias argued that the burials in the so-called southern cemetery of Qumran were Bedouin. Four graves have been excavated in this cemetery. Three of these were east-west burials with head to west and one was a north-south burial with head to south. The graves contained the remains of one woman and four children (grave 3 had two children in the same grave). Zias pointed out that the same kind of rather clumpy beads (which appear to be Bedouin) have been discovered on the adult female skeleton in the southern cemetery and also on the female skeleton of T32, located in the southeastern finger of the Qumran main cemetery. If the beads are Bedouin, then there is a reason to date the southern cemetery and this particular grave in the southeastern part of the Qumran cemetery to the same time, later than the surrounding Hellenistic-Roman graves. Zias added that certain skeletons buried east-west were better preserved than other Qumran skeletons, and that certain adults had significantly worn teeth, indicative of Bedouin.

The southern cemetery (to be distinguished from the southern finger of the main cemetery), however, is located south of the Wadi Qumran, not on the plateau where the other cemeteries lie, and is therefore geographically distinct. The burials here are generally, though not uniformly, east-west. East-west burials are

normal for Muslim burials, but these graves are additionally distinctive in being shallow with no loculus (niche), when most burials at Qumran are deep, with a loculus at the bottom. Not all east-west burials at Qumran are identical to the southern cemetery burials. In the case of the east-west burials excavated in the main Qumran cemetery, three graves of the southeastern finger are typical Qumran graves with loculi (T34, T35, T36) and two (T32, T33) have no loculi like those of the southern cemetery, including the grave that contained the beads. In the mid-1960s Solomon Steckoll excavated an east-west grave there (no. 10) with a loculus. Called T4, it was a typical Qumran grave with a loculus sealed with bricks, and it contained fragments of a Period Ib (first-century B.C.E.) jar in the fill. We may be justified in distinguishing two types of east-west burials: (a) deep, with loculus and (b) shallow, without a loculus. The latter may possibly be Bedouin, and the former not. Alternatively, the orientation of the head may be significant. In the case of T32-T36, in the southeastern finger and in the east-west graves of the southern cemetery, the head was in the west; in the case of T4 and the newly-found skeleton the head was in the east.

There are various problems with Zias's thesis. A detailed typological comparison of the beads has not yet been done. The east-west burials are not uniformly well-preserved, nor do all the adults exhibit worn-down teeth. Good preservation of bones is not necessarily a reason to date the skeletons as late burials, because on the other side of the Dead Sea, at Khirbet Qazaza (also spelled Qazone), the Roman-period skeletons are so well preserved they can even have skin and internal organs. [See also "Who Lies Here?" *BAR*, September/October 1999—Ed.] None of the supposedly Bedouin bones from Qumran (including teeth) could be radiocarbon dated because they lacked sufficient collagen, a substance that deteriorates over time. Given that Broshi and Eshel were successful in obtaining a radiocarbon date on teeth from the mourning enclosure skeletons, it is striking that there was apparently not enough collagen in the Bedouin teeth for a date to be obtained, nor was there enough in any other skeletal material from Qumran. There may be good reasons for this, but it needs further explanation. There is a modern date obtained from tiny bits of wood, probably from packing materials used to

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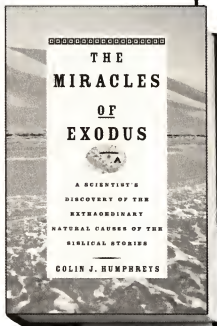
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transport the skeletons off the site after they were exhumed (old wood being often reused for packing cases), but that is all.

I think it is wise not to overstate the case. It may very well be that the southern cemetery graves thus far excavated, and also some of those from the main Qumran cemetery, are Bedouin. However, not all the 54 east-west graves of Qumran—most of which remain unexcavated—must automatically be assigned to the Bedouin. The case is not proven. Furthermore, the excavation of a 2,000-year-old male skeleton buried east-west in what Eshel and Broshi define as a structure indicative of the great importance of the buried man must surely mean that we cannot immediately conclude that every east-west burial at Qumran is Bedouin.

I would also like to suggest why the burial in the mourning enclosure is shallow and not in a loculus, even though it is ancient. The deep burials with loculi were designed to inhibit the excavation of the graves by wild animals; burials within a structure were already protected.

Joan E. Taylor  
Adjunct Senior Lecturer  
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies  
Waikato University  
New Zealand



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## Digs 2003

### Smoochers Identified

I had the good fortune of digging with the two lovebirds pictured on page 53 of the January/February 2003 issue. They are Andrea Klotzbach and Dierk Weinhold of Hanover, Germany, and theirs is a true dig romance. They met during the 1997 digging season at Hazor, but they never told each other of their romantic feelings while in Israel. When Andrea returned to Germany, she sent me an e-mail telling me of her feelings for Dierk but accidentally sent the note to him as well! Dierk thought it was hilarious, and they've been dating ever since. It gets even better. I just received a





Christmas card from their latest trip to Egypt announcing their engagement. Congratulations, you two!

Alannah Herbert  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

### A Man for All (Dig) Seasons

Thank you for publishing the report of John Raab, a BAS dig scholarship winner for the summer of 2002. As the co-director of the Tall al-'Umayri excavations, where John was working, I can vouch for the truth of what he says. Well, mostly. John has a tendency to be overly modest. He was much more important to our project than his report implies. When our computer person had to leave for home, John stepped in and used his database background to save us on several occasions. His recording notebook was also one of the best I have seen. Keeping sending us such excellent volunteers! If you're thinking of joining a dig, let people know about your skills and talents. Archaeologists are scroungers. We can use help in almost every area!

Larry G. Herr  
Professor of Archaeology  
Canadian University College  
Co-director, Madaba Plains Project—"Umayri



## Malamat Interview

### The Glory That Was Mari

Avraham Malamat's poignant admission that though an expert on Mari he had never visited it ("The History Behind the Bible," January/February 2003) prompts me to write about my visit there in 1998.

As the author of books on the ancient Near East, I had always had a lifelong dream to visit Mari and other famed sites now in Syria (Ras-Shamra, Ebla, Dura-Europos); to find these places unvisited, desolate and disintegrating was heartbreaking. In Mari, the once great place is "protected" by a corrugated-tin roof and is otherwise open to the elements. The mudbrick walls, bereft of

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the plastering and their magnificent murals, crumble from a mere touch. Half-open pits in the surrounding area reveal remains of structures, of stairs that lead nowhere. Most of Mari remains unexcavated, and what had been unearthed has been reclaimed by the desert dustwinds. It is in the museums (Aleppo, Damascus, Paris)—and in the minds of archaeologists and lovers of archaeology—that the glory of Mari lives.

Pondering Mari's Biblical connection, such as similarities in customs that your interview points out, I sat early one morning on the terrace of our hotel in Deir-Ezzor (the nearest modern town) and gazed at a breathtaking view of a bend in the Euphrates River; the thought engulfed me that here was where my forefather Abraham and his family crossed the great river from east to west on their way from Ur in southern Sumer to Haran (now in Turkey)—here was where the saga of monotheism began! And the thought made the visit to Mari a worthwhile fulfillment of a dream.

Zecharia Stinchin  
New York, New York



## Incense Altar

### Pfann Mail

I would like to correct a flaw in my article, "Rare Incense Altar Raises Burning Questions" (September/October 2002). Stephen J. Pfann of the University of the Holy Land, Jerusalem, had contributed to the research behind the article but did not receive the credit he is due. The BAR article was based on an article in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1 (2002) to which Dr. Pfann contributed. In the process of rewriting it for BAR, I forgot to have Dr. Pfann mentioned as a key co-researcher, for which I owe him my apologies. In particular Steve contributed to the research on the stepped decoration on the altar and its possible links to Nabatean architecture; he suggested the similarity with the second-third century C.E. limestone

altar from Carmel and found convincing reasons for ascribing this "luxurious" altar to period III at Qumran (74-132 C.E.).

Torleif Elgvin  
Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Oslo, Norway

### John Allegro and the Incense Altar

Thank you, on behalf of my mother, Mrs. Joan Allegro, for sending the September/October 2002 edition of *BAR*. The article by Torleif Elgvin, "Rare Incense Altar Raises Burning Questions," used a picture showing Kando with my father, John Marco Allegro. The article states that in 1953 John bought a bronze inkwell and incense altar that, according to Kando, had been found at Qumran and that he sold them in 1988 to "an anonymous private collector."

This is inaccurate, inconsistent and irrelevant. John had nothing to do with these artifacts. He did not buy the altar or inkwell, and could not have brought them home or sold them in 1988. His letters do not mention them, and none of his family has seen anything resembling these items among his possessions.

Note 1 on page 68 says, "Subsequent proprietors were Faye Barakat of Los Angeles in 1975, Mathias Komor of New York in 1975, an anonymous collector from 1975 until 1992..." Therefore the altar and inkwell did not belong to John Allegro between 1975 and 1988. But the article claims, "Allegro sold them to an anonymous private collector in 1988, before he died. They later passed through a number of hands—until 1994."

I can only think that the insinuation story about Allegro, "the most controversial member of the scholarly team," was put in to add color (red, as in herring) to the article, as it has nothing to do with the discussion of where the incense altar came from or went to.

Judy Brown  
Derbyshire, England

### Torleif Elgvin replies:

*Ms. Brown has correctly noted an error in the article, as the main text says John Allegro sold the altar in 1988. This should have been 1963 (see the information she quotes from the footnote on subsequent owners from 1975).*

*I have discussed Ms. Brown's letter with the present owner of the altar and inkwell, Martin Scheyen, and would like to report to *BAR* readers the following: Mr. Scheyen bought the altar and the inkwell in 1994. After Stephen Goranson published the*

*continues on page 64*

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# Maccabean Hometown Uncovered?

## Modi'in Excavations Yield Synagogue, Tombs

Archaeologists excavating south of the modern city of Modi'in, 13 miles northwest of Jerusalem, may have discovered the first-century B.C.E. Hasmonean city of the same name—where the family of Judah Maccabee is buried, according to the Book of Maccabees (in the apocrypha).

In five excavation seasons over the past three years, Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) archaeologists Alexander Onn, Shlomit Weksler-Bdolah and Yehudah Rapuano have uncovered the ruins of a synagogue, a *mikveh* (ritual bath), monumental graves, two main roads, a system of alleyways criss-crossing the site in a grid pattern and an olive press. The synagogue is an impres-

sive structure with two rows of four columns on each side of a central hall containing benches along its walls—a feature also found in synagogues at Masada, Herodium and Gamla. Signs of fire, together with datable pottery and coins, suggest that the synagogue was destroyed in the early second century C.E. by the Romans.

But does this site in modern Modi'in mark the spot of ancient Modi'in? "One can never be 100 percent sure unless you find an inscription, but based on a number of things, includ-

ing the size of the settlement, its distance from Jerusalem, the public buildings and the number of monumental graves found, we believe this place is the most likely site where the ancient city of Modi'in may have been," says Onn.

The ruins were uncovered during the construction of a highway; after the IAA declared the area a protected site, the road was diverted to the south and plans for constructing some 150 housing units nearby were cancelled.

Two other nearby locations are also candidates for the site of ancient Modi'in: the Arab village of El-Media, which lies 8 miles northwest of Modi'in, and Hurvat Titara, on the outskirts of modern Modi'in.

The burgeoning modern city of Modi'in—slated to grow to a population of 250,000 by 2015—has undertaken conservation work at the site, restoring plaster, stabilizing walls, creating gravel paths for visitors and putting up signs. Alex Weinreb, a Modi'in resident who has worked as a volunteer over the past six years to preserve and promote the site, says the city should invest money in developing a Hasmonean Archaeological Park and museum that would attract tourists to the area and generate local jobs.

Weinreb observed that tombstones uncovered in modern Modi'in have flat tops with holes in each corner that may have supported a pyramid structure. If that theory is correct, the tombs would closely match the description of Maccabean family graves in 1 Maccabees 13:27-28: "And Simon built a monument over the tomb of his father and his brothers; he made it high so that it might be seen, with polished stone at the front and back. He also erected seven pyramids, opposite one another, for his father and mother and four brothers."—Judith Sudilovsky, Jerusalem

### MODI'IN MODERN AND ANCIENT.

Excavators working just south of the modern city of Modi'in believe they have uncovered the ancient city (below) of the same name. Among their many finds is a *mikveh*, or ritual bath (right).



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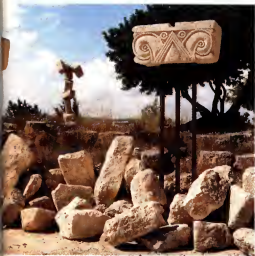
ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY



# Ramat Rachel Opens to Visitors

## Site Was Home to Judean Royal Palace

On a glorious sunny afternoon this past November, Israeli President Moshe Katzav cut a red ribbon in front of the spacious courtyard of an ancient Judean royal palace



YOSHI GILBERT

and officially opened a long-neglected archaeological site to the public.

The ancient site, with remains spanning more than 1,000 years, is located on the grounds of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem on the crest of a hill nearly 3,000 feet above sea level. In antiquity the site overlooked an important crossroad, with one route linking Jerusalem to the north and Bethlehem to the south, and the other connecting the coastal plain in the west to the Dead Sea and Judean Desert in the east. Ramat Rachel was extensively excavated by archaeologist Yohanan Aharoni in the 1950s and early 1960s and then again in 1984 by Gabriel Barkay. But until six years ago, the site was a confusion of archaeological ruins amid uninhabited weeds. Most Jerusalemites swimming at the popular kibbutz pool were largely unaware that just a few feet higher there once stood the palace and citadel of a Judahite king.

Which king this was is disputed. Aharoni

contended that it was King Jehoichaim (609–598 B.C.E.), though Barkay says that the evidence points to the earlier King Hezekiah (727–697 B.C.E.). (Barkay will lay out his arguments and evidence in a forthcoming article in *BAR*.) That the residence was elegant, however, cannot be disputed, judging by the presence there of 10 proto-aedic capitals, a carved stone window balustrade, a sherd perhaps depicting a seated king, royal seal impressions and some of the finest ashlar masonry found in Israel.

Evidence from later periods includes *mikvaot* (ritual baths) and a columbarium (a tomb with niches in which urns were placed) from the Second Temple period (first century B.C.E.–first century C.E.), a villa and bathhouse built by the Roman Tenth Legion sometime between the third and fourth centuries C.E., a Byzantine church and monastery, and early Islamic remains.

In 1996, the Ramat Rachel archaeological project was conceived with the aim of preserving the site and presenting it to the public. The remains of the Judean palace are now the focal point of an archaeological garden designed by Jerusalem sculptor Ran Morin. Morin has added much to the site, including pedestrian paths and a sculptured observation point that spirals up to a deck overlooking a vast panorama of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A still-to-be-completed promenade will encircle the southern slope of the hill, along ancient stone agricultural terraces, and end at the Park of Olives, where Morin's hallmark sculpture stands—olive trees crowning three towering columns, which themselves stand upon a 20-foot-tall platform.

During his excavations, Aharoni identified what most likely are the corners of the casemate wall surrounding the Judean palace. At these corners, Morin erected sculptures (visible at left, above) rising to the probable height of the ancient wall, each made up of stones piled upon each other at seemingly improbable angles; the stones

appear to be at once tumbling and withstanding the pull of gravity. In addition, Morin placed replicas of the proto-aedic capitals found at the site on one edge of the citadel's courtyard.

There has been no attempt to reconstruct the ancient buildings at Ramat Rachel, a good thing, perhaps, given how bad so many reconstructions are. Unfortunately, the captions and plans printed on signs at the site do little to help visitors understand what they are seeing. Once the *BAR* article is published, however, take it in hand and make Ramat Rachel one of your first stops in Jerusalem.—S.E.S. in Jerusalem.



DONALD HIRST

### What Is It?

**A**

Phoenician amulet  
to ward off disease

**B**

Egyptian game-piece in the  
shape of a Semitic prisoner

**C**

Baubble sold in Ephesus  
to Roman tourists

**D**

Cypriot statuette depicting  
the hero Odysseus

(Answer appears on p. 21.)

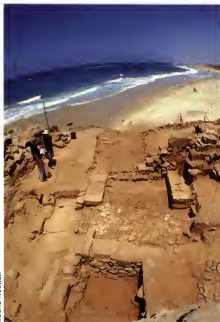
## Digs Update

### Two On, One Off

While the volatile situation in the Middle East and the resulting decline in the number of tourists visiting Israel has caused one long-running dig to forego a field campaign this summer, two digs have recently announced that they are seeking volunteers during the month of July.

The excavation at Yavneh-Yam (ancient Jamnia), 11 miles south of Tel Aviv, headed by Tel Aviv University's Moshe Fischer, needs volunteers from July 6 to August 1 to help uncover seventh-century B.C.E. Iron Age buildings (shown below) and to investigate the site's late Byzantine and early Islamic occupation layers. Yavneh-Yam was occupied from the Bronze Age through the Middle Ages, and was the site of a Jewish victory, under the leadership of Judah Maccabee, against the Greek army of Gorgias

**DIGGING ON.** Excavators at Yavneh-Yam (below) and Ramat Hanadiv (above and below, right) plan to dig this summer.



MOSHE FISCHER



YIZHAR HIRSCHFELD

during the second century B.C.E. Housing is available at the nearby Ayonor Youth Village (four to a room with bathroom, shower and air conditioning). Volunteers must commit to a minimum of two weeks; fees total \$650. Applications should be submitted by the end of May 2003. For further information, contact Moshe Fischer at [fischer@post.tau.ac.il](mailto:fischer@post.tau.ac.il) or consult the Yavneh-Yam Web site ([www.tau.ac.il/~yavneyam](http://www.tau.ac.il/~yavneyam)).

Excavations at Ramat Hanadiv, a palatial complex about 15 miles south of Haifa that dates to the first century B.C.E. reign of King Herod, will be underway from July 6-31. The well-preserved site shown below at right

(many of the palace walls stand over six feet high) has yielded pottery (above), glassware, coins and metal objects from the early Roman period. This season the team headed by Hebrew University's Yizhar Hirschfeld will focus on the palace's residential area. Volunteers will be housed at the Dor Holiday Village resort, located on the seacoast not far from the site. Transportation to and from the dig, and lectures on the site and history of the area, as well as weekly trips in the vicinity, will be offered. Minimum participation is one four-day work week; daily room and board per person will be \$100 for single occupancy, \$80 double, and \$70 triple.



YIZHAR HIRSCHFELD

Contact Hani Davis, volunteer coordinator, by email at hani@actcom.co.il or by fax 972-2-5812452 for further information.

The directors of the Megiddo Expedition (Tel Aviv University's Israel Finkelstein and David Ussishkin, and Penn State University's Baruch Halpern) have announced that they will temporarily suspend their volunteer program. They may revisit this decision if the security situation in the Middle East dramatically improves; prospective volunteers are advised to check the expedition's Web site ([www.digmegiddo.com](http://www.digmegiddo.com)) for updates. The expedition will resume its work in the summer of 2004, concentrating on the Bronze Age temple compound and the Iron Age ashlar palace. The site of Megiddo, 12 miles southwest of Nazareth, features some of the most elaborate Iron Age architectural remains in Israel and is associated with numerous battles chronicled in the Bible.

## What It Is, Is ...

(Answer to puzzle on p. 19)

B

### Egyptian game-piece in the shape of a Semitic prisoner

This small turquoise-colored pawn from Egypt dates to the later part of the New Kingdom era (c. 14th–10th centuries B.C.) and represents a Semitic prisoner with his hands bound behind his back. The long hair and beard the prisoner sports were apparently characteristic of Semitic peoples at the time. A number of Egyptian reliefs and wall paintings depict Semites with these attributes.

From the birth of their civilization through the Roman period, the ancient Egyptians were enthusiastic board-game players. This pawn may have been used to play *senet*, a popular game of strategy and skill. The *senet* board had 30 squares arranged in three horizontal rows of ten squares each. Players sat opposite each other and threw *astragali* ("knucklebones" or small animal bones) to determine how many squares they could move. (The exact rules of the game are not known, however.) Game pieces ranged from plain discs to elaborate figurines like this one.

# David Amiran, 1910–2003

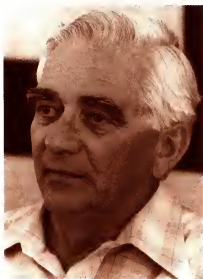
## A Geographer Among Archaeologists

The community of Israeli geographers has lost one of its pillars: David H. K. Amiran, the founder of academic geography in the country, died on February 26th at age 92. In 1949 Amiran established the department of geography at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, assembling a group of European geographers that had emigrated to Israel.

From the beginning, he sought to create links between Israeli geographers and the international community of geographers, particularly those in the United States, Britain and France. Amiran also helped to establish geography departments at the University of Haifa, Tel Aviv University and Ben Gurion University in Beersheba.

David Amiran was born and educated in Germany, where he was taught that the discipline of geography involved studying both the physical environment and how human society functioned within it. After he emigrated to Israel in the 1930s, Amiran investigated the topographical and geological characteristics of numerous ancient sites in the country. He gained additional experience working with topographical maps during his service with the British Army during the Second World War. After the State of Israel was established, Amiran initiated two major mapping projects, which resulted in the publication of the *Atlas of Israel* and the *Atlas of Jerusalem*.

Amiran's focus on the interaction between the physical and the human environment was invaluable to archaeological



research. His seminal papers on the geomorphology and physiography of the country guided archaeologists in their understanding of the location of ancient sites. Amiran's detailed geographical research into earthquakes enabled archaeologists to decipher traces of ancient physical upheaval in their excavations.

David Amiran's meticulous studies of the history of rainfall and climate change in the region (an interest

first sparked by his work in the Meteorological Service during the British Mandate period) led to new archaeological insights. For instance, Amiran argued that the omission of the southern basin of the Dead Sea in the Madaba Map—a sixth century C.E. mosaic map found in Madaba, Jordan, depicting Byzantine Palestine and Lower Egypt—indicates that a drier climate prevailed in the region during the sixth century.

In 1991 he published a paper suggesting that the ancient city of Arad flourished during the Early Bronze Age thanks to a period of more plentiful rainfall. (David's wife Ruth, who survives him, is a prominent Israeli archaeologist, well-known to readers of *BAR* for her excavations at Tel Arad and for her monumental work in early pottery in Israel.)

David Amiran was a long-time member of the Board of Directors of the Israel Exploration Society, which dedicated one of the volumes in its *Eretz Israel* series to him in 1991.—Amiram Gonen, Hebrew University, Jerusalem



## Just Another Israelite Village

*Zertal Badly*

*Misinterprets His Site,*

*Finkelstein Claims*

ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING THE site ... was different ... strange," wrote Adam Zertal concerning el-Ahwat in north-central Israel, which he has been excavating since 1992. The settlement is securely dated by potsherds to Iron Age I (1200–1000 B.C.E.), the period of the Judges in Biblical terms. It was enclosed by a meandering city wall of enormous width—between 18 and 24 feet—which has survived in places to a height of 15 feet! Over 200,000 cubic feet of stones were used to construct this wall. The twisting course "certainly was not dictated by the moderately sloping topography"; rather, it was shaped this way by "aesthetic choice." Zertal was

"surprised to discover a strange emptiness in the town." Most of the area inside the wall was unoccupied.

The town was abandoned only about 50 years after its initial settlement. The site was not occupied again until the Late Roman period; the excavator has found evidence of agricultural activity from that time onward. Who built el-Ahwat, with its strange meandering wall? One of the candidates Zertal considered in his *BAR* article was one of the Sea Peoples—not the famous Philistines, but another tribe called the Shardana. The Shardana came from the Aegean region and, because of the linguistic similarity between "Shardana" and "Sardinia," Zertal suspected that this island was their original home. When he explored the possibility further, he found parallels between construction at el-Ahwat and the unusual stone structures of Sardinia called *nuraghi*. Indeed *nuraghi* in Sardinian means "heap of stones." The *nuraghi* are made of large stones and are most often irregular or wavy in design, like the city wall at el-Ahwat. The *nuraghi* civilization on Sardinia reached its height from about 1500 to 1200 B.C.E., a little earlier than el-Ahwat.

Some of the *nuraghi* have an internal labyrinth of corridors and corbelled roofs. (A corbelled roof is made of rows of overlapping stones, eventually forming a dome-like shape.) Significantly, the city walls of el-Ahwat are built with corridors leading into the street; at the other end, the corridors form rooms with corbelled roofs. Zertal went to Sardinia himself to check out the similarity and became more convinced than ever: He had found the Shardana. "The key characteristics of Sardinian architecture were fully preserved at el-Ahwat," he wrote. Zertal

In a recent issue of *BAR*, the archaeologist Adam Zertal put forward a theory that was bound to raise eyebrows: The site of el-Ahwat in north-central Israel was not, he argued, an early Israelite settlement (as other scholars have assumed), but a town built by the Shardana, one of the Sea Peoples who invaded Israel in the 12th century B.C.E. ("Philistine Kin Found in Early Israel," May/June 2002).

Additionally, Zertal claimed that the Shardana originated from the Mediterranean island of Sardinia—as the tribe's name would seem to suggest. As evidence, Zertal cited the architecture of el-Ahwat, which appears to be built in the Sardinian style.

Now another prominent archaeologist, Israel Finkelstein, has rejected Zertal's theory. His rebuttal appears in the *Israel Exploration Journal*, an eminent but hard-to-find academic journal. Because the Zertal-Finkelstein debate is important to the field of Biblical archaeology, we summarize here its main points for our readers.—Ed.

added, "We were forced to conclude that el-Ahwat must have some cultural connection to Sardinia. The most compelling argument arises from the process of elimination. If the cultural connection with Sardinia is not valid, is there any alternative connection that would explain what we have found? In my best judgment, the answer is no."

Now Israel Finkelstein, of Tel Aviv University, says he has a better explanation—a much better one. El-Ahwat is a typical unwallled Iron Age I village, like hundreds of others, Finkelstein claims in a recent article in the *Israel Exploration Journal*.<sup>1</sup> These are the villages that William Dever—and many others following him—identify with the



A BOWL RIM found at el-Ahwat in north-central Israel (above, top) bears a decoration almost identical to the pattern on a Sardinian chalice (bottom). The parallel would seem to support Adam Zertal's claim that el-Ahwat was built by the Shardana, one of the Sea Peoples, who (Zertal says) came to Israel from Sardinia.



emerging Israelites (or "proto-Israelites"), not the Sea Peoples.

What about that huge, meandering wall? In Finkelstein's judgment, it is not a city wall at all—not even the wall of a village, as Finkelstein characterizes the site. What Zertal perceives as a wall is simply "the remains of a Late Roman (and later) agricultural system of fences, terraces and piles of stones from clearing plots for cultivation—a phenomenon well known in the hill country."

Finkelstein notes that the supposed city wall has survived to a height of at least three feet taller than the Iron Age I buildings within the site. Zertal explains this by saying that the later agriculturalists dismantled the internal houses. Why, then, did they not also dismantle the wall? A much better explanation, says Finkelstein, is that this "city wall" was "originally built as a fence/terrace in the Late Roman period on top of the Iron [Age] I buildings."

Some of the buildings inside the site are built diagonally to the so-called city wall, again indicating that the "wall" had been built at a different time, probably on top of the buildings inside. Moreover, part of the wall runs inside the city; this section is clearly built over the Iron Age I buildings (see plan).

While Zertal describes this wall as between 18 and 24 feet wide, "in most places it is much thinner," Finkelstein writes. He adds that "sites with similar shapes of large terraces, fences and piles of stones cleared from the fields are a well-known phenomenon in the hill country ... The routine of clearing stones in order to create cultivation plots is typical of hilly Mediterranean regions in all periods, and has nothing to do with the identity of Iron I peoples."

Another factor weighing against this site belonging to the Shardana is that it is inland, not on the Mediterranean coast, where the Sea Peoples landed and built their cities. Zertal himself notes this problem. We would hardly expect to find the Shardana settling deep in the hill country.

Finally, as for the corridors and corbelled roofs: They are nothing but agricultural field towers, says Finkelstein. Just "another well-known phenomenon in the highlands, which is related, in many cases, to the practice of clearing stones from the fields."

Finkelstein also discusses the "funnel-shaped plaza" (Zertal's interpretation) in front of the purported gate of the city. Look at the walls of the funnel-shaped plaza; they



are nothing but terrace walls, created with the stones cleared from the fields, says Finkelstein.

As for the pottery, Finkelstein notes that—based on what he has seen at the site, courtesy of the excavator, and what little has been published—it appears to be similar to the Iron Age I pottery found in scores of hill country sites from this time.

Zertal's argument depends on two pottery sherds decorated with herringbone incisions that are similar to a few sherds found in Sardinia. To which Finkelstein replies: "Similar incised sherds" have been found at a number of Iron Age I sites in Israel, so "there is no need to go as far as Sardinia for parallels." And none of the other pottery from el-Ahwat bears the characteristic decoration of pottery made by the Philistines (another Sea People) or of the pottery of the northern seacoast of Israel and Lebanon (where other Sea Peoples, such as the Tjekker and Denyan, are thought to have settled), nor of the pottery from Cyprus, where the Sea Peoples are thought to have sailed from.

As for Zertal's comparison of his architecture with that of the Sardinian *nuraghi*, Finkelstein notes that the *nuraghi* which Zertal discusses are several centuries earlier than the el-Ahwat structures.

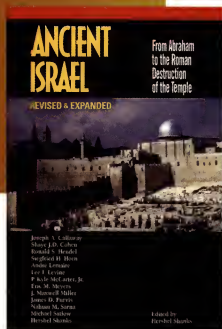
In sum, Finkelstein concludes, "el-Ahwat is an ordinary unfortified Iron [Age] I village ... The inhabitants belonged to the local population of the region."—H.S.

<sup>1</sup>Israel Finkelstein, "El-Ahwat: A Fortified Sea People City?" *Israel Exploration Journal*, vol. 52, no. 2 (2002).



TWISTING AND TURNING for 2,000 feet, a wavy city wall—if, indeed, that was its ancient function—encircles the site of el-Ahwat (aerial photo, top, and site plan above). Adam Zertal has linked the wall to the *nuraghi* (domed stone structures, often wavy in design) found on Sardinia. However, fellow archaeologist Israel Finkelstein contests this, declaring that the el-Ahwat "city wall" is in fact a Late Roman-era agricultural complex.





## Review Damns BAS's Ancient Israel

*What do you think? If the great Albright still "lives," is that a compliment or a criticism?*

In 1988, the Biblical Archaeology Society published (with Prentice-Hall) *Ancient Israel*, subtitled *From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. Its eight authors (in eight chapters) were among the leading scholars in their fields: Kyle McCarter, Nahum Sarna, André Lemaire, Siegfried Horn, James Pritchard, Leo Levine and Shaye Cohen. *Ancient Israel* proved to be one of the most popular texts in colleges, universities and seminaries across the country. After more than a decade, however, it needed updating. A second edition was published in 1999, with each of the eight chapters either revised by the original author or by a new contributor. The new authors included Ronald Hendel, Max Miller, Eric Meyers, Michael Seltman—and me (Hershel Shanks). This revised edition was reviewed in the highly regarded *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* in the April 2002 issue by Alexander H. Joffe, now at Purchase College, State University of New York. It is a damning review.

We print it below for several reasons. First, our readers should know when we are criticized as well as when we are praised.

Just as important, however, the review raises some extremely interesting issues that should be discussed in our pages. Comments, both pro and con, are welcome from lay and scholarly readers alike.

*I confess I really don't understand*

**T**HIS BOOK IS A CURIOUS THROW-back to the days of high classical, biblical archaeology, when the Bible, extrabiblical texts and archaeological evidence all played nicely together, for the betterment of Christians and Jews alike, or perhaps better, postclassical, since in this updated edition, a number of references are made to recent scholarship that has, in fact, completely overthrown the once happy and confident synthesis. But the authors and their redactors soldier on, bravely asserting the plausibility of biblical accounts.

The problem is categorical. Are the "Patriarchal Age," "Israel in Egypt," and the "Settlement of Canaan" still topics that can be discussed historically, as opposed to historiographically, or theologically? The search for the "historical kernel" and the like that categorizes the chapters by

Professor Joffe's review. Perhaps some of our readers can help me. I certainly recognize Professor Joffe as a scholar in the forefront of modern archaeologists. But there seems to be a deep divide between what is considered in this review old-fashioned Biblical archaeology and the newer, allegedly more sophisticated, form that Professor Joffe practices. And I'm not sure what defines that difference.

Professor Joffe says that we can no longer discuss the patriarchs, or Israel in Egypt, or the settlement in Israel from a historical perspective. I hear him, but I don't know why he says this. I often say that there are no illegitimate questions, only illegitimate answers. Why is it illegitimate to ask whether there is a historical core to the narratives in the Bible? Why is it illegitimate to be interested in the Bible from a historical perspective? Is Professor Joffe saying that such a question is illegitimate, or that we—the authors of *Ancient Israel*—answer it illegitimately? Is he saying that we are afraid to reach negative historical conclusions or that we skew the evidence? I have the feeling he wants us to ask only historiographical questions, not historical questions. But I'm not sure he says that, and if he does, I don't know why.

Professor Joffe concludes his review with the judgment "Albright lives." My problem is this: I don't know whether we should be proud or ashamed of this. Somehow, the name Albright has become a derogatory term. We welcome your views.—H.S.

McCarter, Sarna, and Callaway (revised by Hendel, Shanks and Miller, respectively) seems archaic and almost quaint. These chapters contain much information, but the categories of literature, "history" (whatever that is) and archaeology have been frapped in the Old Albrightian blender to the point where they can barely be separated. The authors serviceably lay out some of the problems, but the overall goal seems more harmonious than critical.

Lemaire's chapter on the United Monarchy faces similar challenges, from intellectual nihilists (Lemche), neo-supercensionists (Thompson) and anti-Zionists (Whitelam). But here biblical texts at least provide somewhat more coherent and concrete narratives against which archaeological data can be bounced, compared to the amorphousness of tribes

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## ANCIENT ISRAEL



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"sojourning" and "sett[ling]." Horn's chapter on the Divided Monarchy (revised by McCarter) has the advantage of both biblical and extrabiblical materials, and is a conventional retelling of political history illustrated with the occasional horned altar and fertility figurine. One disturbing aspect of this chapter, however, is the presence of a number of photos of bullae from private collections that allegedly contain seal impressions of famous biblical persons. The appearance of looted antiquities in a book published by *Biblical Archaeology Review* (BAR) is not surprising, but the strong probability that they are in fact fakes should not be either.

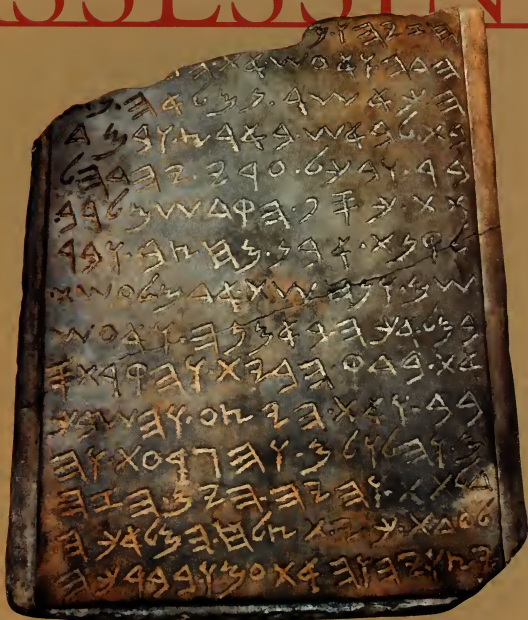
Purvis's chapter on the exile (revised by Meyers) is another conventional recapitulation, with minimal archaeological and extrabiblical content. Levine's discussion of Hellenism of course has the advantage of multiple sources and does not get too bogged down on Qumran matters. It is refreshing, after credulity, bending over backwards, denial and evasion, to see someone in the volume confront frankly the problems of interpreting different sources and types of evidence. So too with Cohen's chapter (revised by Satlow). Archaeology does not play a significant role in these chapters either, but there is at least some interest outside of political history.

For whom is this volume intended? Scholars will find nothing new, and students and lay people will be ill-served by the conflation of categories and regress to approaching ancient Israel overwhelmingly through theological texts. As a whole the volume is like an updated version of Chester McCown's *Ladder of Progress in Palestine* (New York, 1943). The irony is that the difference between neo-Albrightian scholarship such as this and explicitly non-critical, evangelical work such as Albert Hoerth's *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998) is more in tone than content or approach, basically the spin put on the Patriarchs and the Exodus. A far more useful contribution is B.S.J. Isserlin's *The Israelites* (London, 1998), a thoughtful and level-headed book that keeps theology, history and archaeology for the most part separate, and when it does combine them, does so cautiously, skeptically and judiciously.

Albright lives.

—Alexander H. Joffe

# ASSESSING



BIBLICAL MUSEUM OF ISRAEL

*the*

# JEHOASH INSCRIPTION

# Demonstrably a Forgery

HERSHEL SHANKS

**W**AS IT TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE? In recent months, the world learned of an inscribed tablet apparently written by Jehoash, the ninth-century B.C.E. king of Judah. But almost immediately, questions were raised about its authenticity.

After examining the text of the Jehoash Inscription, Frank Moore Cross, professor emeritus at Harvard and America's leading expert in ancient Semitic inscriptions, to cite one notable example, has concluded that the inscription itself "leaves little doubt that we are dealing with a forgery, and that, fortunately, it is a rather poor forgery."

In a manuscript submitted to the *Israel Exploration Journal*, published for scholars in the field, Cross explains in highly technical language why he has reached this conclusion.

The Jehoash Inscription describes the collection of money for the repair of the First Temple in Jerusalem. It closely parallels the descriptions of the same event in 2 Kings 12:5-17 and 2 Chronicles 24:4-14. We print in the box on page 29 Cross's most recent transcription and translation of the inscription and, in the boxes on pages 28 and 30, the parallel texts from Kings and

Chronicles.\* Cross finds that "the forger is heavily dependent" on these Biblical passages.

The purported forger is certainly very clever—and knowledgeable: He (if he is a man) broke off the first line of the inscription, presumably containing Jehoash's name and the first letter of his father's name. According to Cross, "The forger presumed the decipherer of the inscription would be forced to restore the name of Jehoash who, of course, in scripture was the one who repaired the Temple."

Cross then examines the inscription line by line. In lines 3-4, he finds that the expression *nml'b nadt lb 's* (meaning "generosity") includes a post-Biblical usage. It is a "curious composition," Cross tells us. The last two words, *lb 's*, appear to have been inspired by *lb 'ys*, as found in 2 Kings 12:5. "Clearly we are not dealing in these instances with ninth-century [B.C.E.] Hebrew."

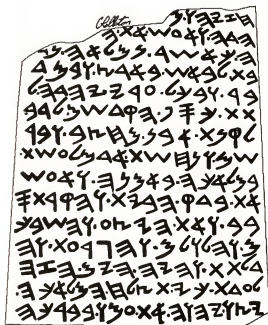
In Line 8, the forger refers to "Edomite copper [or bronze—the same Hebrew word]," one of the materials purchased with the sacred donations to repair the Temple. The passage in Kings mentions wood and stone, but not copper. In Chronicles, however, copper (or bronze) is among the purchases. The forger took this detail from Chronicles. However, he also identified the copper as being Edomite copper. Cross concludes, "The mine smelters of Edom were a chief source of copper in Biblical antiquity, and the forger is sufficiently knowledgeable to know this."

In Line 10, the forger uses the word *bdq* to mean "repair," its meaning in modern Hebrew. But "in ancient/Biblical language ... [it] refers to something damaged or broken,"<sup>1</sup> just the opposite of the meaning intended by the forger. Cross calls this error "a howler."

In Line 12, the word Cross translates as "spiral staircases" is spelled *lvlm*. Biblical Hebrew (like modern Hebrew) is written without vowels. Early on, however, a few consonants did double duty as rudimentary vowels. One of these was the letter *vav*, indicated by a *w* in the scholarly practice Cross uses. As a vowel, a so-called *mater lectionis* or "mother of reading"—a vowel serving as a consonant—the *vav* here represents the vowel *u*. However, the use of consonants as vowels within words, especially in a one-syllable word, did not develop as early as the ninth century B.C.E. As Cross says, "In the eighth and seventh century there are rare cases in which an internal *mater lectionis* is used in a one-syllable word." Hence, the *vav* within the word is an anachronism, exposing the forger.

In the final line of the inscription, the forger misspells the word for "his people." Before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. it would have been spelled *'mh*—with a *heb* as the final letter. After the Babylonian Exile, it would have been spelled

\*For additional information about the inscription see "Is It or Isn't It?" BAR, March/April 2003 and the First Person column on page 6 of this issue.



CHRISTOPHER ROBERTSON

## 2 Kings 12:1-16

In the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away; the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense on the high places.

Jehoash said to the priests, "All the money of the holy things which is brought into the house of the Lord, the money for which each man is assessed—the money from the assessment of persons—and the money which a man's heart prompts him to bring into the house of the Lord, let the priests take, each from his acquaintance; and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered." But by the twenty-third year of King Jehoash the priests had made no

repairs on the house. Therefore King Jehoash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and said to them, "Why are you not repairing the house? Now therefore take no more money from your acquaintances, but hand it over for the repair of the house." So the priests agreed that they should take no more money from the people, and that they should not repair the house.

Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the Lord; and the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. And whenever they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest came up and they counted and tied up in bags the money that was found in the house of the Lord. Then they

would give the money that was weighed out into the hands of the workmen who had the oversight of the house of the Lord; and they paid it out to the carpenters and builders who worked upon the house of the Lord, and to the masons and the stonecutters, as well as to buy timber and quarried stone for making repairs on the house of the Lord, and for any outlay upon the repairs of the house. But there were not made for the house of the Lord basins of silver, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, or any vessels of gold, or of silver, from the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, for that was given to the workmen who were repairing the house of the Lord with it. And they did not ask an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to pay out to the workmen, for they dealt honestly. The money from the guilt offering and the money from the sin offering was not brought into the house of the Lord; it belonged to the priests.

*'mw*—with a *vav* as the final letter. In this supposedly pre-Exilic inscription, the forger uses a post-Exilic spelling. Cross calls this "an astonishing mistake."

Finally, the forger has attempted, but failed, to use script (the shape and form of the letters) that was characteristic at the end of the ninth century B.C.E. "The forger's script stands closer to the Phoenician script of the early ninth century [Cross here cites such an inscription], but cannot even be called 'Phoenician.' Certain letters, notably *taw*, do not have Phoenician forms." Cross says the forger used some very famous pre-Exilic inscriptions—the Tel Dan inscription\* and the Mesha

Stele (also called the Moabite Stone)\*\*—as models for his script. As a result, "The script is a mixture and does not exhibit the elongated forms that mark the separation of Hebrew from its Phoenician ancestor as early as the tenth century [B.C.E.]." For a twentieth-century inscription, Cross cites the Gezer Calendar.

Cross's conclusion: "Demonstrably a forgery." ☐

\*See "David" Found at Dan," BAR, March/April 1994.

\*\*See André Lemaire, "House of David" Restored in Moabite Inscription," BAR, May/June 1994.

†Here Cross is quoting a private communication he received from his colleague P. Kyle McCarter of Johns Hopkins University.

### THE LINGUIST:

## Hebrew Philology Spells Fake

EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN

Department of Bible, Tel Aviv University

**T**HE LANGUAGE OF THE Jehoash Inscription is fake. It is not idiomatic ancient Hebrew but rather a perversion of it. If authentic, it would be a phenomenal find. But clearly it is not a genuine artifact.

To be declared authentic, any inscription that has not been excavated under controlled conditions by professional archaeologists must pass three basic tests. One is physical: The stone, the patina and any markings must all be judged to be ancient by an archaeological laboratory.

Second, the shape and form of the letters must be appropriate to the time and place that the inscription is believed to hail from. This is the paleographical test.

Third, the language, rhetoric and form of the inscription must be those common to monumental royal inscriptions of the First Temple period (tenth through early sixth centuries B.C.E.). This is the philological test, the area of my expertise. Paleographers have already declared the inscription a forgery. Geologists are apparently divided. As an expert in the language



of the Hebrew Bible, I have no difficulty in declaring the Jehoash Inscription a fake. Colleagues with whom I have discussed the matter agree.

I will discuss several examples here [some of which are also referred to in the discussion of Frank Moore Cross's analysis; we include Cross's examples because Greenstein comes at the subject from a slightly different angle—Ed.] One might argue that one or two of them are not enough to prove that the Jehoash Inscription is a fake, but one can hardly ignore the cumulative weight of all.

1. The Jehoash Inscription uses the expression "to make repairs to the house (temple)," *wa'as 'et bedeq habbayit*. This is fine in modern Hebrew. But in Biblical Hebrew, as is clear from 2 Kings 12, where the story of Jehoash's effort is related, *bedeq habbayit* does not mean "repair" the "house" (the Jerusalem Temple), but it refers to the *fissures* in the house that require repair!<sup>1</sup> The verb in Biblical Hebrew that does mean "repair" is *hizzeq*, "to fortify"—one repairs the fissures in the foundations and walls by "fortifying" them.

In later Hebrew (apparently beginning with the Mishnah, the code of Jewish law that was written down in

the early third century C.E.), the term *bedeq bayit* came to be used in the sense of "(setting) the house in order." Whoever wrote the inscription did not understand the Biblical usage and replaced the ancient locution with a much later one.

2. The inscription expresses the hope that "the work will succeed" (*ki titlah hammelakhah*). In early Biblical Hebrew a person succeeds (literally, "makes one's path smooth") in one's work. The "work" itself does not succeed. Only in later Hebrew (compare, for example, the post-Exilic Psalm 1:3) can a person's action "succeed."

3. The inscription says that "this day will be a testimony ('*edut*) (to the success of the project)." In First Temple Hebrew the word '*edut* does not mean "testimony," but rather "covenant."

The term "Ark of the Covenant" is expressed using either the common word for "covenant"—*berit*—or the more restricted, "priestly" word, '*edut*. The way one says "to be [or serve as] testimony" in early Hebrew is "to be a witness"—consistently using the term '*ed* and never '*edut*—as one can see in Genesis 31:44; Deuteronomy 31:19, 21, 26; and Isaiah 19:20.

4. The word used in the inscription with the supposed

## Jehoash Inscription

### HEBREW TRANSCRIPTION

### TRANSLITERATION

### TRANSLATION

[י] . . . . . יְהוֹאָשׁ	LINE A. ['nky yhw 'š bn ']	[I am Yehō'ash son of A-]
. . . . . ה' יְהוָה	LINE 1. hzyhw . m[lk . y]	hazyahu king of Judah,
. . . . . וְאֵשׁ אֶת הַיְּהוָה	LINE 2. hdh . w's . 't . hb[yt.hz]	and I performed the work on th[is ho]use
ה' כְּאִשֵּׁר נִמְלָאָה	LINE 3. h . k's'r nml'h . n[d]	When men's generosity was full
בְּתֹלַב אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ וּבְמִדְבָּר	LINE 4. bt . lb 'š . b'rš . wbm d	(men) in the land and in the steppe,
בְּרִי וּבְכָל עִיר יְהוּדָה	LINE 5. br . wbkl . 'ry . yhdh . l	and in all the cities of Judah
תֵּת כֶּסֶף הַקֹּדֶשִׁים לְרֵב	LINE 6. tt . ksp . hqdšm . lrb	giving consecrated money as sacred donations abundantly
לִקְנֵת אֲבֹן מַחֲצֵב וְיָד	LINE 7. lqnt . 'bn . mḥšb . wbr	to buy quarry stone and juniper
שֵׁם וְתַחֲשֵׁת אֲדָמָה לַעֲשֹׂת	LINE 8. šm . wnḥšt . 'dm . l'st	wood and Edomite copper, performing
בְּמַלְאָכָה בִּצְמִיחָה וְאֵשׁ	LINE 9. bml'kh . b'bmnh . w's	the work in good faith—then I made the
אֶת בִּרְקִיבִית וְהִקְרַת ס	LINE 10. 't . bdq . hbyt . whqrt [.] s	repair of the Temple, and the encircling walls,
בֵּב וְאֶת הַדְּעָה וְהַשִּׁבְכ	LINE 11. bb . w't . hyš' . whšbk	and the storied structure, and the lattice works,
ס הַדְּלָלוֹם וְהַרְעָה וְה	LINE 12. m . whlwl m . whgr't . wh	and the spiral staircases, and the recesses,
דְּלָתֵת וְדִוַּי הַדֹּם הַזֶּה	LINE 13. dlrt . whyh . hym . hzh	and the doors. And this day will become
לְעֵדָה כִּי תִצְלַח הַמַּלְאָכָה	LINE 14. l'dt . ky . tšlh . hml'kh	testimony that the work will prosper.
יְיָ יְהוָה אֶת עַמּוֹ בְּבִרְכָּה	LINE 15. ysw . yhw . 't . mw . bbrkh	May Yahweh ordain his people with blessing.

Brackets indicate reconstructed letters. Transcription by Christopher Rollston, Emmanuel School of Religion; transliteration and translation by Frank Moore Cross, professor emeritus, Harvard University.

meaning of "spiral staircases" has been assumed by the forger to be (in the singular) *lul*. The word occurs only once in the Bible, in the form *belulim* (1 Kings 6:8). The forger took the first syllable, *be-*, to be a preposition and not part of the root. However, the Hebrew linguist Elisha Qimron made a cogent case, long before the announcement of this inscription, that the initial *b* is part of the word's root, which is *b-l-l*, meaning "to mix, stir." The inscription's *lul* is thus a ghost word. And even if it were not, its spelling with a *vav* in the middle to indicate the long vowel is a deviation from ancient scribal practice that, by itself, raises the most serious suspicions.

5. The inscription concludes with the invocation of a divine blessing for the people. In the hundreds of royal inscriptions that have come down to us from the ancient Near East, however, there are no parallels to the language of the inscription's invocation. The forger based the inscription's final blessing on a similar formula found in Leviticus 25:21 and Deuteronomy 28:8. However, there is a telltale difference in syntax between the version in the inscription and the instances in the Bible. In the Bible, God is asked to "command a blessing for you," while in the inscription God is to "command the people with a blessing," which is both a deviation from the Biblical idiom and nonsensical.

Repeatedly one finds in the inscription not new Hebrew forms that are simply not attested in the Bible or in ancient Hebrew inscriptions but naïve distortions of known Biblical expressions, as well as the apparent use

of a word that never even existed!

There is a simple explanation for all of these philological anomalies. Someone who reads Biblical Hebrew as though it were modern Hebrew has turned authentic ancient expressions into later locutions and corrupted genuine idioms thanks to an ignorance of the finer points of the classical language. The words may be the words of the Bible, but their usage is that of a fraud.

If the text has been forged, you may ask, why would someone invest so much into producing an object that seems authentic physically but not linguistically?

There are at least two possible answers: (1) The forger does not realize how poorly he (or she) understands Biblical Hebrew. He or she possesses certain technical skills, but not of the linguistic kind. The *chutzpah* of the forger is evident in the length and full legibility of the inscription that he or she has tried to put over on us. (2) The forger may also be relying on the public's trust of the so-called hard sciences and distrust of philology, which belongs to the humanities. If the geologists can't find anything wrong with the inscription, many people might wonder, how can the philologists be so sure it's a fake?

Sometimes we do not have an adequate basis for making determinations; but sometimes, as in the present case, we do. I have not the slightest doubt that this inscription is a phony. It was not written in ancient times. ☞

<sup>1</sup>We can corroborate the meaning of *bedeq* as "fissure" from other Semitic languages, such as Akkadian.

## 2 Chronicles 24:1-14

Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, the priest. Jehoiada got for him two wives, and he had sons and daughters.

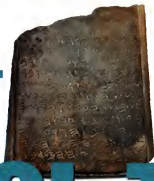
After this Joash decided to restore the house of the Lord. And he gathered the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out to the cities of Judah, and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year; and see that you hasten the matter. But the Levites did not hasten it. So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief, and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant

of the Lord, on the congregation of Israel for the tent of testimony?" For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God; and had also used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the Ba'al's.

So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it outside the gate of the house of the Lord. And proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in for the Lord the tax that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished. And whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come

and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the Lord, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the Lord, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the Lord.

So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. And when they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the Lord, both for the service and for the burnt offerings, and dishes for incense, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Jehoiada.



# FOOL THE EXPERTS

Make a convincing  
fake and  
*win \$10,000!*

**Object: To make a facsimile of the Jehoash Inscription that will fool the experts.**

The recently disclosed Jehoash Inscription has divided the scholarly world. If it is authentic, it would be the first royal Israelite inscription ever found. Some experts, primarily epigraphers and linguists, are sure it is a fake; others, primarily geologists, are just as sure that it is authentic. Those who claim it is a fake say that the patina, which coats even the cracks in the stone and the incisions of the letters, can be manufactured so that it would fool the experts (see "First Person," page 6).

If you, or a group, are ready to take up this challenge, please contact us, stating your team's qualifications and plans. We will choose the most qualified application or applications and provide

up to \$4,000 to cover the costs of producing the fake, including the cost of obtaining a stone and reasonable travel expenses. The fake should replicate all aspects of the Jehoash Inscription, including the inscription itself, the cracks and the patina. Portions of the prize money will be awarded for four different aspects of the reproduction. If there is more than one winner, the prize money will be divided among the winning applicants. (See detailed rules at left.)

You have nothing to lose, so start planning your application today. Applications must be submitted by November 1, 2003. Submit yours to:

FAKE  
Biblical Archaeology Society  
4710 41st St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016

## Create a Fake Contest Rules

1. All applications must be submitted by November 1, 2003. Applicants must identify all members of the applicant's team and their qualifications, and provide a protocol as to how the team proposes to create the fake, including the patina. The object is to reproduce the inscription on a visually and petrographically similar stone, making it at least as good—textually and paleographically—as the Jehoash Inscription and to reproduce on the replica the patina inside the letters and crack in the Jehoash Inscription.

2. Judges appointed by BAR will (at their sole discretion) select one or more teams (but no more than three) to enter the contest based on their qualifications. Each team will have access to up to \$4,000 in out-of-pocket costs to conduct the experiment. No funds will be provided for the use of space or equipment or for time spent. Funds may be used for necessary travel expenses.

3. The fake must be submitted to BAR on or before November 1, 2004.

4. The \$10,000 prize will be awarded in categories as follows:

A. \$1,000 for engraving a text at least as accurate paleographically and roughly the same length as the Jehoash Inscription.

B. \$1,500 for creating a basic patina that would fool the experts.

C. \$2,500 for creating a patina that includes charcoal and gold globules, like the patina on the Jehoash Inscription.

D. \$5,000 for creating letters that go through a crack in the stone so that they look like they were inscribed *before* the crack formed and for creating a patina in these letters and in the crack.

A team may win in one or more categories. If more than one team successfully achieves one of the objectives, the prize money applicable to that achievement will be divided equally among the successful teams.

5. The decision of the judges will be final.

6. All fakes submitted as entries in this contest shall become the property of the Biblical Archaeology Society.

7. Applicants may be requested to allow filming of their activities in connection with creating the fakes. If requested, they will permit such filming.

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

We are grateful to Joseph G. Hurley, Davia Solomon and Lia Marie Solomon of Acton, California, for their generous support of this project.

# MOUNDS *of* MYSTERY

## *Where the Kings of Judah Were Lamented*

GABRIEL BARKAY

**A**T THE BEGIN-  
ning of the 20th century, when Jerusalem, still centered  
around its ancient core, was surrounded by agricultural  
land and orchards, 20 mysterious earth-and-stone  
mounds rose above the city's western horizon, clearly  
visible from afar. Today several of them have disappeared,  
flattened by excavation or by the development of new  
neighborhoods. But these enigmatic man-made  
mounds have mystified archaeologists since they were  
first noticed in the 1870s. Were they burial mounds  
with tombs inside? Were they places for some kind of  
cultic observances? Why were they clustered on one side  
of Jerusalem and nowhere else in the country?

The new interpretation offered here links Biblical  
texts and archaeological evidence. I propose a startling

explanation: Each of these tumuli—artificial, truncated,  
cone-shaped mounds—marks the place where crowds of  
ancient Judahites gathered to commemorate the death  
of one of the kings of Judah in the tenth to seventh  
centuries B.C.E., and each of them served as a memo-  
rial mound.

All but one of the mounds are clustered in three groups,  
roughly five miles from the Old City. Several are now  
within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem. The mounds  
were first described in the Survey of Western Palestine  
(SWP), published in 1874 by the London-based Pales-  
tine Exploration Fund (PEF). These classic volumes describe  
the land and all its ancient remains visible at the time.  
In those days, more than a century ago, this area to the  
west of Jerusalem was wild, rugged and unwelcoming.

GABRIEL BARKAY



Few people went there (certainly no pilgrims or travelers), deterred by rumors of robbers and lawless villagers.

One of the PEF surveyors, a pioneer in the research of Palestine named Charles F. Tyrwhitt Drake, who is

NESTLED TODAY within modern neighborhoods in western Jerusalem, the mound above and 19 others were once west of the city's populated areas. The mounds, called *tumuli*, were clearly manmade but their purpose has eluded excavators for over a century. The mound shown here was excavated by the great American scholar William F. Albright; the gash his team left on the mound gives it its humorous nickname: "Albright's behind." Archaeologist Gabriel Barkay, in the accompanying article, uses Biblical passages and comparisons with similar structures elsewhere in the Mediterranean world to identify these mysterious mounds at last.

buried in the Protestant cemetery on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, noticed seven of these artificial mounds. He wrote in the PEF Quarterly Statement of 1874: "We came across some very curious mounds ... The mounds vary from twelve to thirty feet in height, and from fifteen to fifty feet in diameter at top. The construction of all seems identical. Rough stones of no great size are closely packed with chips and a certain proportion of mould, and thus form a very compact mass, which can only have been erected with the expenditure of much labour. Hence the *prima-facie* view is that they were piled up for some special and important purpose."<sup>1</sup> Tyrwhitt Drake guessed that the structures were tombs, probably of foreigners, and concluded that "a thorough



examination of one of them would ... likely prove of great interest."

Tyrwhitt Drake also reported that "small tentative excavations—by Captain Charles Warren, R.E. [Royal Engineers], as I am told—have been made in the mound named El Barish." But we know nothing about the results of these "tentative excavations."

The mounds were then ignored, regarded as unrelated to Jerusalem, until the great American Biblical archaeologist and Semitics scholar William Foxwell Albright, who excavated in Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s and whose students at Johns Hopkins University dominated Biblical archaeology for more than a generation, took an interest in these mysterious mounds. Indeed, one of Albright's first digs, after he arrived in the Holy Land in 1920, was at one of them. His efforts left the mound scarred by a trench across its peak, whose profile from afar earned it the sobriquet "Albright's Behind." Surrounded by desolate hills in the 1920s, the mound today is protected by a high fence, amid the walks and playgrounds of the new neighborhood of Givat Massuah. Few suspect that it is more than just a pile of earth.

In 1923 Albright dug for only five days at what was later identified as mound 2. He reported on his excavation in a letter to the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*: "The tumulus proved a surprise. Instead of being either Neolithic or Bronze Age it turned out to be most certainly Early-Iron ... The potsherds are characteristically eleventh century B.C."<sup>2</sup> Albright

went on to propose a theory of Philistine origins for the mounds (although no mounds similar to these are known in the coastal plain—the land of the Philistines). He noted that the pottery in the mound dates to the same era as pottery from tumuli in Thessaly, Greece—between 1200 and 1000 B.C.E. He concluded that "the tumuli were not erected by natives, but by an invading army, so that the probability that they were raised by the Philistines during the age of Samuel, Saul and David is very great." Soon thereafter, Albright's dating of mound 2 was seemingly confirmed when he compared the few cooking pot fragments and other sherds found in the tumulus to stratigraphically-dated 11th century B.C.E. pottery he excavated from level II at what is thought to be Gibeah (Tel el Fûl), north of Jerusalem. Gibeah, according to the Biblical sources, was King Saul's capital in the late 11th century B.C.E.

As for the function of the mounds, Albright followed Tyrwhitt Drake, who had already proposed that they were tombs. But he found no burial in his excavation. Unfortunately, Albright left no photographs or drawings of the pottery he found in the mound.

The tumuli were then forgotten for the next 30 years; not a single journal article mentioned them. But war and politics brought changes. In the aftermath of Israel's War of Independence in 1948, control of Jerusalem was divided between the Kingdom of Jordan and the new State of Israel. The historical parts of Jerusalem—the walled Old City and Jerusalem's ancient core at the City of David—ended up under Jordanian control. Most of the new city was part of Israel, surrounded on the east, south and north like a horseshoe by the Jordanian-controlled area. Only the western side of the new city was available for further Israeli development. When new neighborhoods were planned there, the mounds were "rediscovered."

In 1953 Israeli archaeologist Ruth Amiran excavated three of the mounds and surveyed the others, identifying and numbering 19 mounds within a distance of less than three miles.<sup>3</sup> Each mound was set on top or on the slope of a hill overlooking a large open area. A 20th mound was not numbered, but rather given the name Gizo after the Arabic name for the site (Beit Giz). It lies about ten miles northwest of the others. Its shape, size, conspicuous location on top of a ridge and date (indicated by some surface Iron Age sherds) led Amiran to include it with the others in her survey list. However, it seems not to belong to the same phenomenon as those just west of Jerusalem.

Amiran excavated mound 5 down to its foundations. This was the first dig I ever visited in the vicinity of Jerusalem. I was in elementary school. I went there with my father's friend who often took me hiking to "far-away" places. At the time, there were no houses in that area. We seemed to be in the middle of nowhere. It is hard to imagine that desolate landscape now. Today the

"THE WILD WEST." All but one of Jerusalem's enigmatic mounds were located in the three areas marked on the map below. Until recent decades these areas were far to the west of the city's populated sections; today they are enclosed within Jerusalem's newest neighborhoods.



area is near Kiryat Hayovel and Kiryat Menahem, densely populated neighborhoods in western Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

Amiran began her excavation of mound 5 by exposing a ring wall at the base, divided into 17 sections or facets, each 5 meters long (about 16 feet or 10 Biblical cubits), separated by the width of a single protruding stone. Additional narrow walls encircled the mound higher up on the slope. The inner walls were probably used to contain fill later piled within the base wall. Amiran then dug a 16-foot-wide trench through the heart of the mound, later widening the trench and removing the entire mound.

Beneath the fill comprising the mound she found a platform, partially paved with stone slabs, located on top of a flat, quarried, rocky surface. The paved platform was not in the geometrical center of the mound.

There were two entryways through the outer ring wall to the paved platform. One, with steps, led directly to it. A pit 3 feet deep was located in the paved platform; fine charcoal material filled this pit.

On a pyre near the platform Amiran found burned organic material, which she identified as "charcoal pieces,



GARI MALBANDIAN

A RING WALL encircles mound 5 (above). Excavated by Ruth Amiran half a century ago, the ring wall consists of 17 sections, each five meters long (about 16 feet, or 10 Biblical cubits). Amiran also found a platform with the burnt remains of a pyre. She believed (though not wholeheartedly) that Jerusalem's mounds were tombs even though no burials were found within them. Three decades later, when a neighborhood community center was slated for expansion, author Barkay excavated mound 4 (shown below shortly before excavation), which adjoined the center.



GORDON FRANZ, COURTESY GABRIEL BARKAY



burnt animal bones, and black earth saturated with fat." Here she found most of the few sherds she discovered. Amiran noted that a mini-tumulus—a small pile of stones—was "heaped rather carefully over the platform and immediately around it," covering also the remains of the pyre. This entire structure was covered by the stones and earth-fill of the tumulus.

In addition to her excavation of mound 5, Amiran investigated mound 6 and also conducted a small trial dig into mound 4, which I would later explore myself. She concluded from the potsherds and from the few vessels that could be reconstructed that the three mounds date to the time of the late kingdom of Judah, the seventh century B.C.E. In a 1958 article Amiran wrote of the Jerusalem mounds, "The fact that no interment or traces of any human bones were found in the pit or beside it, and the ceremonial character of the flight of steps leading to the platform, led us to [conclude that] the whole site [is] a high place (*bamah*)."<sup>5</sup> But, she added: "It should be stated frankly that this suggestion of the mound as a *bamah* [a place where cultic rituals were performed, often translated as "high place" in English Bibles] was based on the absence of a burial in the excavated tumulus. It seems to me now that [the evidence of the excavation] does corroborate the interpretation of the tumulus as a tomb,"<sup>5</sup> despite the lack of any sign of a burial. In support she refers to tumuli in Anatolia and to a theory of Albright's, both of which suggest that burials were sometimes located outside the tumuli associated with them.

But in oral communications Amiran never put



GABRIEL BARKAY

MOUND 4 displays its ring wall (above); the closeup photo shows that the wall's stones were small and easily handled by individuals. Gabriel Barkay notes that the mounds and their walls could be built easily and quickly. Like Amiran, Barkay found a platform with a burnt area; in addition he uncovered pottery and jar handles stamped with winged symbols and the word *Imelekh* ("belonging to the king"), shown in the photo opposite. The latter date to the reign of King Hezekiah (727-697 B.C.E.). Barkay's excavation led him to suspect that the Jerusalem mounds did not serve as tombs but were built for a royal ceremony of some sort.

## "Don't Lose the Opportunity"

Of the 19 mounds surveyed and numbered by Ruth Amiran in 1953, fewer than half remain today. And even these are endangered by urban growth. It takes only one bulldozer and a 20-minute mistake for another mound to disappear.

The most promising mound for further investigation remains tumulus 4. Untouched by construction, it is the best preserved and the most prominent one on the western horizon. A tunnel into the base of the mound would preserve the mound itself and at the same time reveal its inner secrets. The tunnel could then be opened to visitors, who from the summit could also enjoy the beautiful view of the hill country to the west of Jerusalem and, to the east, the Mount of Olives, the tributaries of the Soreq Valley, the new city of Jerusalem and the forests of Mt. Herzl.—G.B.

much stock in this tomb interpretation and returned to her notion of the mounds as high places for some religious rites. It is this view that is accepted by most scholars today.

Amiran identified the platform within the mound as the *bamah* and speculated that the *bamah* was later defiled by the righteous kings of Judah, most probably Josiah, who sought to purify the cult and concentrate it at the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23). After the defilement, the *bamah*, according to Amiran, was covered by heaps of stones and earth in order to destroy it.

If Amiran is correct about the defilement, the heaping of stones, in fact, monumentalized the site instead of destroying it. Moreover, when the Bible speaks of "defiling" the *bamot* (plural of *bamah*), it uses the word *heir*, best translated as "shaved off" (see, for example, 2 Kings 18:4, 22; 23:19; 2 Chronicles 17:6, 32:12; Isaiah 36:7). This, too, is inconsistent with Amiran's theory.

Following Amiran's excavation of tumulus 5, Ze'ev Yeivin of the Israel Department of Antiquities excavated tumulus 3. Yeivin agreed with Amiran's conclusions that the tumuli were defiled *bamot*, though he did not find either a platform or a "mini tumulus" under mound 3. However what little pottery was found in this mound dated to the seventh century B.C.E.<sup>6</sup>

Since 1958, there have been only passing references to these intriguing tumuli; most uncritically accept Amiran's interpretation of the mounds as cultic high places, or *bamot*.

I have a very different explanation of the mounds, one that is influenced by a visit I made in 1961 to the excavations near Salamis, on the eastern coast of Cyprus, opposite Syria. The eminent Cypriot scholar Vassos Karageorghis excavated a royal cemetery there in which some of the tombs consisted of artificial mounds or tumuli. The most intriguing was tumulus 77.<sup>7</sup> He anticipated finding a burial, as he had at another Salamis mound (3), but in tumulus 77 he reached bedrock without finding a tomb. When he widened his trench he discovered—buried under the earth at the bottom of the tumulus—a platform built of mudbricks with steps around it. Atop the stepped platform, but not at its geometrical center, was a small stone inner tumulus. After carefully dismantling this mini-tumulus Karageorghis found a circular pyre with the remains of offerings.

The mini-tumulus was surrounded by 16 holes cut into the mudbrick platform, each of which contained remnants of burnt wood. The finds from the pyre itself included several clay faces (both male and female), feet and palms of hands, a horse's head and a woman's breast. The imprint of wood appeared on the inside of the faces, suggesting that moist clay effigies had been pressed against wooden poles that were fixed in the 16 holes. When the poles were burned, the effigies were fired. Gold buttons and threads from royal garments found in the ashes suggested that the effigies were clothed in regal attire. Karageorghis identified the mound as the place of a memorial ceremony for Nicocreon, a monarch of Salamis, who committed suicide in 311 B.C.E. together with about 15 members of the royal family when an enemy threatened the city.

Tumulus 77 from Salamis was built by the same method as the Jerusalem tumuli: The platform base and pyre plus the mini-tumulus were covered with earth- and stone-fill. Concentric ring walls of decreasing diameter with stone-fill inside gave the mound its conical shape. The Salamis mound was not simply a careless piling of stones—and neither are the Jerusalem tumuli. Amiran described the mounds as having been made in stages; in fact, they were built up like multi-tiered wedding cakes.

I was troubled by Amiran's interpretation of the tumuli as cultic high places. People want their church, their chapel, their place of worship very close to where they live. Where then is a nearby settlement? Five miles from





Jerusalem is very far. Moreover, we read in the Bible (Deuteronomy 12:2, 1 Kings 14:23, 2 Chronicles 28:4) that the *bamot*, the high places, were on every hill and under every tree. That we have these mounds only west of Jerusalem—and not near Hebron, Bethlehem, Lachish or any other site in the kingdom of Judah—argues against their being the *bamot* of the Biblical account.

In addition, if the mounds were cultic high places, we should find pottery scattered about with dates spanning a long period of time, left by visitors enjoying a picnic near the high place. But hardly any pottery has been found in or around the mounds. Amiran found only one restorable cooking pot and very few potsherds. And why did the excavators not discover any cultic objects—vessels, incense burners, incense altars? All the pottery was regular household ware.

The route to my explanation of the function of the Jerusalem tumuli lies through the Bible.

The Second Book of Chronicles tells about the death



EXCAVATING AT SALAMIS IN CYPRUS, 1952-1974

**MYSTERY SOLVED.** Author Barkay believes the key to identifying the Jerusalem mounds can be found in Cyprus. Shown above is an impressive artificial mound at Salamis, called tumulus 77 by its excavator, the eminent Cypriot scholar Vassos Karageorghis. Peeling away the mound, Karageorghis uncovered not a tomb but an impressive platform (below), at the center of which stood a mini-tumulus. In its basic elements, Barkay notes, the mound at Salamis mirrors the mounds west of Jerusalem.



EXCAVATING AT SALAMIS IN CYPRUS, 1952-1974



EXCAVATING AT SALAMIS IN CYPRUS, 1982-1983



EXCAVATING AT SALAMIS IN CYPRUS, 1982-1983

of King Hezekiah in 697 B.C.E.: "Hezekiah slept with his fathers and they buried him with the sons of David, and all of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death" (2 Chronicles 32:33).

The "honor" paid by all of Judah and Jerusalem is mentioned after the king was buried, so it apparently does not refer to the funeral. Giving honor is a separate matter.

Second Chronicles relates that King Asa of Judah, who died in about 867 B.C.E., was buried in "his own sepulcher that he had made for himself in the City of David." He was put on a bier of spices and other precious materials. The text then adds: "A very great fire was made in his honor" (2 Chronicles 16:14).

By contrast, Jehoram—the mid-ninth-century B.C.E. king of Judah whom, according to the Bible, the Lord inflicted with a gruesome disease (his bowels dropped out and he died)—did not receive an honorary fire: "His people made no fire for him, as they had for his forefathers" (2 Chronicles 21:19).

The Book of Chronicles is a late and ideologically slanted source that zealously protects the legacy of the Davidic dynasty. Just kings get their reward and bad ones—like Jehoram—receive their punishment. No fires for them.

Corroboration of this practice referred to in Chronicles with respect to Jehoram also comes from the Book of Jeremiah. Regarding Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (who ruled 597-586 B.C.E.), Jeremiah prophesied: "You will die in peace and, like the fires for your royal fathers, they will burn fire for you in your memory, and lament *hoi adon* [alas master]" (Jeremiah 34:5). This prophecy was never fulfilled because of Zedekiah's disobedience (Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem had at first freed their Hebrew slaves, but then enslaved them again): Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, killed his sons, blinded Zedekiah and deported him to Babylon (Jeremiah 34:21; 2 Kings 25:7). But the important point is that the practice of memorial fires is confirmed.<sup>8</sup>

**RING OF FIRE.** Underneath the inner mound of tumulus 77 at Salamis, Karageorghis found a circular pyre (shown above, left) with remnants of clay faces (above, right) and burnt wood. Karageorghis believes that inner mound once held clay effigies on wooden poles and that tumulus 77 was built in 311 B.C.E. for a memorial ceremony for Nicocreon, king of Salamis. Similarly, Gabriel Barkay believes the mounds west of Jerusalem served as the sites of memorial observances for the earlier kings of Judah. These ceremonies are alluded to in the Bible; the prophet Jeremiah says of one king, "They will burn fire for you in your memory, and lament 'Alas master'" (Jeremiah 34:5).

I have pieced together a plausible series of events based on Biblical and archaeological evidence: A king died. The news took time to spread throughout the kingdom. A month or so after the king had been buried within the City of David, a ceremony took place for all the people (2 Chronicles 32:33). There was no space for them in the densely built up and narrow streets of Jerusalem. To avoid damaging agricultural plantations that ringed the city, they gathered on the barren hills outside the city, probably on land that was royal domain.

The entire ceremony took only a few hours. A plat-

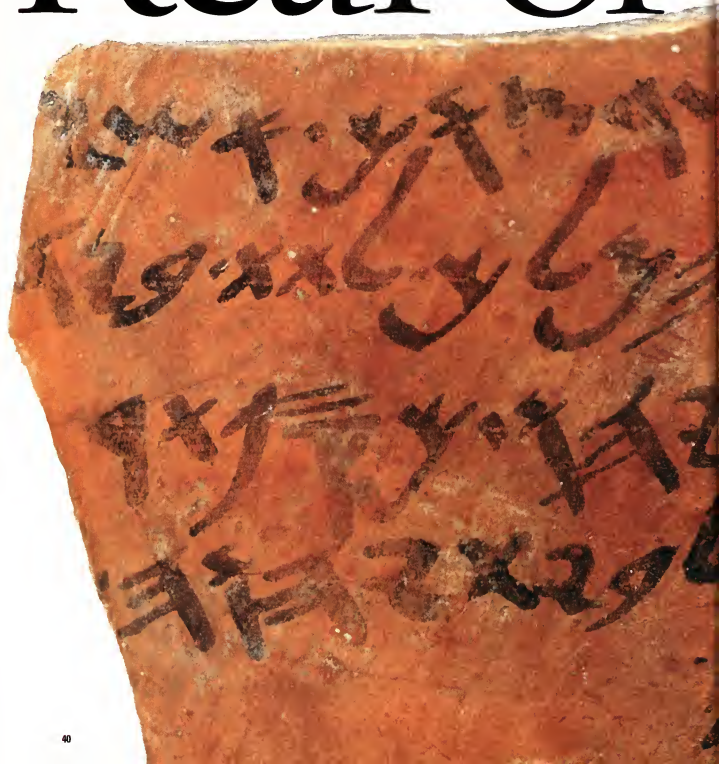
*continues on page 66*

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The "Three Shekels" and "Widow's Plea" Ostraca:

# Real or



# Fake?



HERSHEL SHANKS

ONE OF THE MOST ASTOUNDING inscriptions to surface in recent years records a donation of three shekels to the Temple of the Lord (*Beit Yhwh*) in Jerusalem. It is written on a broken piece of pottery (called an ostracon) and dates somewhere between the ninth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Another ostracon, apparently from the same hoard (the handwriting is the same), is a widow's petition for part of her deceased husband's estate—to which, however, she was not entitled under Biblical law.

Both ostraca surfaced on the antiquities market and are in the private collection of Shlomo Moussaieff of London. Because they are unprovenanced, the question of their authenticity was raised at the outset. The three scholars who originally published the ostraca in a scholarly French journal are convinced that they are genuine.<sup>1</sup> In connection with a 1997 BAR article on the two ostraca,\* we consulted three more internationally famous paleographers, and they, too, pronounced them authentic.<sup>2</sup> As reported in that BAR article, the authenticity of the ostraca was also supported by laboratory tests on the pottery and the ink used for the inscription and on the white patina that had formed on them. (Patina is a microscopic film that builds up on ancient objects.)

Nevertheless, Israel Eph'al and Joseph Naveh, two prominent Israeli scholars—Naveh is Israel's leading paleographer, an expert in ancient handwriting—have questioned the authenticity of the ostraca.<sup>3</sup> To forgers, Naveh is a kind of glum Jaubert, relentlessly tracking them down and exposing them. He has unmasked several in the past. He has also obliquely

\*See Hershel Shanks, "Three Shekels for the Lord," BAR, November/December 1997.



insinuated that certain inscriptions *might* be forgeries. His suspicions—even mere doubts—cast a lasting pall over an inscription, provoking fear in scholars who might otherwise assume its authenticity. Naveh can kill with a withering glance.

Commenting on a recently published corpus of West Semitic seals (most of which are Hebrew) by Nahman Avigad, Naveh describes how the author so loved gathering material for the book that he insisted on doing the work “entirely by himself.” Unfortunately, Avigad passed away not long before completing the project, so that job fell to a younger scholar, Benjamin Sass. “Avigad was confident,” Naveh tells us, “that they [all the seals in the corpus] were genuine.” But Naveh himself was not so sure. He noted that 49 seals out of more than 1,200 bore “somewhat peculiar iconography and letter forms.” He did not specify what the “peculiar iconography and letter forms” might be. While admitting that

“no scholar thus far has proven that [these seals] are recent fabrications ... there were [nevertheless] rumors among scholars concerning their authenticity.” This was enough to cast doubt over the authenticity of these 49 seals. Because of Naveh’s caveat, few, if any, scholars would dare to use them in research.

In their article on the Moussaieff ostraca, Eph’al and Naveh recall two occasions when Naveh unmasked forgeries by showing how the forger used previously known inscriptions to create his text. Eph’al and Naveh quickly add, however, that the two Moussaieff ostraca “cannot be compared with the above-mentioned forgeries.” Then why do they mention them?

The authors go on to say they “do not claim that the [Moussaieff] ostraca have been recently fabricated, because they believe that such an accusation should not be leveled unless it can be proven beyond any doubt.” But despite this professed restraint, Eph’al and Naveh

## Ashyahu: He’s Josiah

**W**HO IS ASHYAHU, the king mentioned on the “Three Shekels” ostrakon? There is no monarch with that name in the Bible, either as ruler of the southern kingdom of Judah or as ruler of the northern kingdom of Israel. Some scholars have suggested that the name Ashyahu is a form of the name Yoash or Yehoash—the three forms combine two elements, *ash*, meaning “has given,” and *yah*, a shortened form of the Israelite God Yahweh (scholars call the name of the deity in a person’s name the theophoric element). All three names mean “God has given.” Ashyahu, these scholars suggest, simply switches the two elements found in Yoash and Yehoash—a common phenomenon in ancient Israelite names.

We know of two Biblical kings named Yoash or Yehoash (usually spelled Johash and Jehoash in English Bibles). Yehoash—the same king who is supposedly mentioned in the controversial inscription discussed in the articles beginning on page 26—ruled Judah about 835–801 B.C.E., and Yoash ruled Israel about 802–787 B.C.E. If the Ashyahu of the ostrakon is one of these two kings, then the ostrakon dates to the late ninth or early

eight century B.C.E. But I believe Ashyahu actually refers to a later—and more important—Biblical king: Josiah.

That Ashyahu may be Josiah was raised as a third possibility in the original **BAR** article on the “Three Shekels” ostrakon. Josiah ruled Judah from 640 to 609 B.C.E. and instituted an important religious reform, centralizing all worship of Yahweh at the Temple in Jerusalem. Josiah’s name in Hebrew—Yo’shiyahu—contains the same two elements as Ashyahu (*yo’sh* is the imperfect, or past, form of *ashl*).

The only difference between the two names is that Ashyahu drops the first syllable of Yo’shiyahu. Ashyahu is simply a slightly shortened form of Yo’shiyahu—what we would consider a nickname.

We see this slight shortening with other Hebrew names, including Biblical ones. The most pertinent example is Hezekiah, Josiah’s great-grandfather, who ruled from 727 to 697 B.C.E. and who survived a siege by the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib. His Hebrew name, Yehizqiyah (or its variant, Yehizqiyah, which has the condensed form of the deity’s name at the end), appears more than 40 times

in the Bible. But a shortened form, Hizqiyahu (or Hizqiyah) appears 60 times! Yehizqiyahu has the same relationship to Hizqiyahu as Yo’shiyahu has to Ashyahu: The longer form has an initial syllable that is missing in the shorter form. (Note that I am not speaking of the variation in the theophoric element between -yahu and -yah at the end of the name, but of what happens at the beginning of the name.)

Another example is Yeberekyahu (Isaiah 8:2), the father of the prophet Zacharia, who is also called Berekyah or Berekyahu (Zachariah 1:1,7). Again, the first syllable is dropped in the shorter forms.

The name Ashyahu on the “Three Shekels” ostrakon is a perfectly good short form of Yo’shiyahu—King Josiah of Judah. We should also note that Josiah’s reign, in the late seventh century B.C.E., matches the date assigned to the ostrakon on paleographic grounds by the three scholars who first published it and by Ada Yardeni, one of Israel’s leading specialists in ancient scripts.

—Robert Stieglitz, Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures, Rutgers University-Newark



proceed to strew the path with doubt.

In the case of the Moussaieff ostraca, Eph'al and Naveh have at least listed the reasons for their misgivings. Their major doubt arises from the parallels they discovered between the Moussaieff ostraca, on the one hand, and Biblical passages and other known ancient inscriptions on the other. "Such a high degree and frequency of similarity ... can hardly be regarded as accidental," they conclude.

For example, the "Widow's Plea" ostrakon opens with the phrase, "May Yahweh bless you in peace" (*ybrkk yhwsh bslm*). Psalm 29 ends with a similar phrase: "May Yahweh bless the people in peace" (*yhwsh ybrk 's 'mw bslm*). Did the psalm inspire the "forger" of the ostrakon? Eph'al and Naveh apparently think so. (On the other hand, the comparison could as easily lead to the opposite conclusion: that the ostrakon is genuine.)

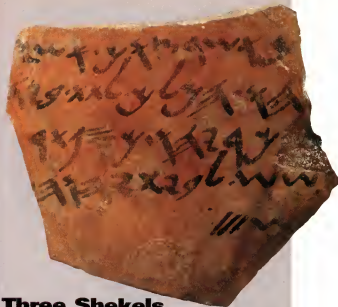
Another example cited by Eph'al and Naveh: The "Three Shekels" ostrakon begins, "Pursuant to the order to you of Ashyahu the king" (*k'šr šwk 'šy hsh hmlk*). An inscription from a site in the Sinai called Kuntillet 'Ajrud reads, "Says Ashyu the king" (*'mr 'šyw hmlk*). Again the question is whether the inscription found in an excavation inspired a forger to use a similar phrase. Eph'al and Naveh suspect it did. Perhaps two parallels would not be enough to damn the Moussaieff ostraca, but the authors assemble seven in all.

Eph'al and Naveh also make palaeographical criticism (that is, of the shape and form of the letters). The three scholars who originally published the ostraca, they claim, were guilty in their French article of "analyzing this script in a facile way." The Hebrew letter *dalet*, for instance, "has a very long upper stroke extending far to the right ... This is very rare" in Hebrew inscriptions from before the Babylonian Exile of 587 B.C.E. Three other letters have suspicious "upward thickened ticks at their ends," according to Eph'al and Naveh.

But coming to the defense of the Moussaieff ostraca is another well-known Israeli scholar, Elisha Qimron (yes, the scholar who successfully sued BAR for publishing his claimed reconstruction of a Dead Sea Scroll\*). Qimron is an expert in Hebrew linguistics, and his analysis of the texts of the ostraca leads him to the opposite conclusion from Eph'al and Naveh. "In my opinion," says Qimron, "the inscriptions' grammatical structure proves that they are authentic and not forgeries ... There are no inaccuracies in the early Hebrew used in the inscription ... Whoever wrote the inscriptions was very fluent in early Hebrew and its fine points. Is there an erudite forger capable of creating such a masterpiece?"<sup>24</sup>

Qimron examines five grammatical structures in the text. For example, the "Widow's Plea" ostrakon states, "my husband died." This phrase consists of only two words in Hebrew: *mat ishi*. The phrase appears frequently

\*See "Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due," BAR, March/April 2001 and "Israeli Scholar Bares His Fingers—Again," BAR, January/February 2003.



## Three Shekels Receipt

### TEXT:

1. K'ŠR ŠWK.'ŠY
2. HW.HMLK.LTT.BYD
3. [Z]KRYHW.KSP TR
4. ŠŠ.LBYT YHWH[.]
5. Š 3

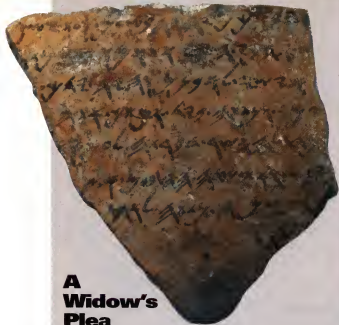
### TRANSLATION:

1. Pursuant to the order to you of Ashya-
2. hu the king to give by the hand
3. of [Z]echaryahu silver of Tar-
4. shish to the House (or Temple) of Yahweh
5. Three shekels.

Brackets indicate that the letter or word has been reconstructed. Dots between words are word dividers.

in the Bible, although sometimes the two words are reversed. In the entire history of Biblical linguistic studies, there apparently has been no discussion of what this difference in word order means. So Qimron undertook the study himself. He collected all the instances in the Bible and found that in 13 cases the word order matched that of the ostrakon; in five cases, the word order was reversed. Analyzing the context of each occurrence, Qimron concluded that the reversed order was used to describe a background fact, something that occurred well in the past. The word order used in the ostrakon, on the other hand, signifies a declaration, as if to say, "My husband has just died."

In the case of the "Widow's Plea" ostrakon, a declaration would have been needed to satisfy legal requirements—so that the official, the *sar*, to whom it was addressed could act. That is why this word order was used in the widow's plea. A forger would hardly know this. Even Qimron did not know it until he studied the matter.



## A Widow's Plea

### TEXT:

1. YB[R]KK[.]YHWH BŠ[L]M.W'T.YŠM
2. 'DNY.H[ŠR]'T'MT[K]MT
3. 'YŠY.L'BNM.WHYH.YDK.
4. 'MY.WNTTH.BYD.'MTK.'T.H
5. NĦLH'ŠR.DBRTH.L'MS
6. YHW.W'T.ŠDH.HĦTM.'Š
7. RBN'MH.NTTH.L'Ħ
8. YW.

### TRANSLATION:

1. May Yahweh bless you in peace. And now, let  
my lord, the [king] hear your maidservant.  
[ ] Dead
3. is my husband with no children.  
And may your hand be
4. with me, and may you give into the hand  
of your maidservant the
5. estate which you promised to Amas-
6. yahu. And as for the wheat field whi-
7. ch is in Nafamah, you gave it to his
8. brother.

Our translations may differ slightly from those of the publishers of the *editio princeps* because their English translations were not originally available to us. We thank Professor P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., for his assistance with these translations.

Some expressions used on the ostraca are more common in Hebrew literature of the Second Temple period (sixth century B.C.E.–first century C.E.) than in the First Temple period (tenth–sixth century B.C.E.), when the ostraca were supposedly written. For Qimron, however, this is a sign of the ostraca's authenticity: A number of genuine inscriptions from the First Temple period

contain linguistic expressions characteristic of literature from the Second Temple period, showing that they were also used earlier. "In my opinion," writes Qimron, "an expert forger would avoid anything that could arouse suspicions and the use of Second Temple period linguistic expressions would surely awaken such suspicions." Therefore, the writer's use of these expressions tends to prove, not disprove, authenticity.

I talked to Naveh and asked him if he was convinced by Qimron's argument. "Qimron did not change my view," he said. So the matter remains.

The authenticity of the "Widow's Plea" ostrakon has also been questioned by two German scholars, who argue that it is a forgery on linguistic, rather than paleographical, grounds.<sup>5</sup> The noted Sorbonne scholar André Lemaire has answered these arguments, however, example by example.<sup>6</sup> He believes that it is true that some of the language in the Moussaieff ostrakon can be questioned, but the anomalies are not striking enough to conclude that the ostrakon is a forgery, especially in the face of the scientific tests on the ink and patina. Lemaire adds that some aspects of the paleography can also be questioned. (And he notes that the German authors did not even address the matter of paleography.)

As for the ostrakon's paleographical issues that Lemaire detected—the letters seem slightly curved and the vertical strokes on certain letters are accentuated—Lemaire concludes that the ostrakon is probably the work of an advanced scribe's apprentice. Based on all the factors—linguistic, paleographic and scientific—he has no doubt that the ostrakon is authentic.

Those who object to scholars relying on unprovenanced inscriptions point to the uncertainties that they say are typified in the two ostraca under consideration here. To the extent that there is uncertainty—and readers must decide this for themselves—it is no different, however, from the uncertainty that clings to many archaeological artifacts. It's the nature of the discipline. In the case of an unprovenanced inscription, it is just one more factor to take into account. S

<sup>1</sup>Pierre Bordreuil, Felice Israel and Dennis Pardee, "Deux Ostraca Paleo-Hebreux de la Collection Sh. Moussaieff," *Semiotica* 46 (1997), p. 49.  
<sup>2</sup>Frank Moore Cross of Harvard, P. Kyle McCarter of Johns Hopkins University and André Lemaire of the Sorbonne.

<sup>3</sup>Israel Eph'al and Joseph Naveh, "Remarks on the Recently Published Moussaieff Ostraca," *Israel Exploration Journal* 49 (1998), p. 269.

<sup>4</sup>Elisha Qimron, "New Hebrew Inscriptions: Their Linguistic Origin," *Lehonen* 61 (1998), p. 181.

<sup>5</sup>Angelika Berlejung and Andreas Schüle, "Erwägungen zu den neuen Ostraka aus der Sammlung Moussaieff," *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 11 (1998), pp. 68–73.

<sup>6</sup>"Veuve sans enfants dans le royaume Juda," *Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999).

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# The Three Shekels Receipt and the Fourth Commandment

BERNHARD LANG

**T**HE "THREE SHEKELS" inscription from the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection in London, published in **BAR**,<sup>\*</sup> may change the way we punctuate—and therefore the way we understand—some of the Ten Commandments. I do not suggest the change is a major one, but it is highly interesting nonetheless.

The Ten Commandments appear twice in the Bible, once in Exodus and again in Deuteronomy. But they are not identical. The phrase "as the Lord your God commanded you" (Deuteronomy 5:12,16) appears twice in Deuteronomy. This phrase is omitted from the parallel passages in Exodus (Exodus 20:8,12) because in Exodus the Lord is speaking. In Deuteronomy, a second telling of Biblical events, Moses recounts to the people what God had said at Sinai as they are about to enter the Promised Land.

But it is unclear whether the phrase in Deuteronomy, "as the Lord your God commanded," refers to the commandment just given or to the material that follows.

The first appearance of the phrase in the Deuteronomistic decalogue is in the Fourth Commandment. The problem is how to punctuate it:

Observe the Sabbath, to keep it holy  
as the Lord your God commanded you  
six days shall you labor, and do all your  
work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to  
the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any

work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or  
your manservant, or your maidservant, or  
your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle,  
or the sojourner who is within your gates,  
that your manservant and your maidservant  
may rest as well as you ...

Should the commandment read, "Observe the Sabbath, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you?" Or should it read, "Observe the Sabbath, to keep it holy. As the Lord your God commanded you: Six days shall you labor," etc.?

In the second appearance of the phrase, the question is whether it connects to the preceding commandment to honor one's father and mother or to a series of commandments afterward:

Honor your father and mother  
as the Lord your God has commanded you  
that your days may be long and that it may  
go well with you in the land that the Lord  
your God is giving you. You shall not murder;  
you shall not commit adultery; you  
shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness  
against your neighbor; you shall not  
covet your neighbor's wife ...

Traditionally, "as the Lord God has commanded you" is interpreted to apply to what went before, and a period is placed at the end of the phrase: "Honor your father and mother as the Lord your God has commanded you." It could, however, apply instead to the following material and take a colon instead of a period.

So while the first appearance of the phrase could introduce the instructions as to how the sabbath should be observed, the second appearance, instead of being appended to the commandment to honor your parents, would introduce the fifth commandment: "As the Lord your God has commanded you, 'That your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you: You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal ...'" and so on.

This issue turns on the Hebrew word *ka'aser*, meaning "as" or "thus" or "because." It has been thought that in Biblical Hebrew *ka'aser* cannot begin a sentence, and so the phrase in question must be attached to the preceding sentence. The inscription published in **BAR**, which records a three-shekel donation to the Temple of Yahweh and dates to sometime between the ninth and seventh centuries B.C.E., forces us to revise this view: It begins with the word *ka'aser!* The authors of the original French publication of the ostrakon translate it "as"—"As Ashyahu the king commands you..."<sup>1</sup> The inscription shows that even in Biblical times, a sentence could begin with "as." It thus shows that the phrase "as the Lord your God commanded you" may just as likely apply to what follows it as to what precedes it.

—Bernhard Lang is professor of theology at the University of Paderborn, in Germany.

<sup>1</sup> I would translate it "thus," "Thus Ashyahu the king commands you ..." The difference is intended to highlight whether the phrase refers to something that went before ("as") or something to come after ("thus").

\*"Three Shekels for the Lord," **BAR**, November/December 1997.

# PENDING YOUR WAY THROUGH JEWISH HISTORY

ANCIENT  
JUDEAN COINS

TELL  
THEIR STORY

SANDY BRENNER

COINS, ANCIENT AND modern, facilitate the flow of commerce. But their usefulness does not end there. Coins are also effective tools of mass communication—to disseminate propaganda. This was especially important in the ancient world, before television or even the printing press. Thanks to this second role, coins also provide considerable

historical information. And they are often very beautiful, too.

In these pages, we present a series of “firsts” in coins used in Judea—the first Temple tax coin, the first coin used in Judea with a portrait on it, and so on. These examples can serve as an introduction to the world of ancient Jewish coins, including the history they reveal and the important motifs they bear.



OBSERVE



REVERSE

## before 333 BCE

### ◀ FIRST COIN FROM JERUSALEM

MATERIAL: Silver

DENOMINATION: Hemi-Obol

SIZE: ¼ inch in diameter



ACTUAL  
SIZE

This silver "YHD" coin was the first to be minted in Jerusalem. "YHD," at upper right on the reverse (back) side of the coin above, is the consonantal spelling of *Yehud*, the Persian name for the province of Judea. (The Persians ruled Judea from 538 B.C.E., when they defeated the Babylonians, until 333 B.C.E., when Alexander the Great swept through the Near East.) Because the

"YHD" coins are very small, it seems likely that they were struck in Jerusalem by local Jewish authorities, though at the direction of the Persians. (If the Persians themselves had minted them, they almost certainly would have issued larger coins as well.) The known examples are all tiny (about 1/4 inch in diameter, only half the size of a dime) and were worth one-twelfth of a *drachm*, a skilled craftsman earned

about a *drachm* a day.

A lily graces the obverse (front) side of the "YHD" coin. Lilies were commonly used as architectural motifs in ancient Israel, especially on Jerusalem's public buildings, including the First Temple: "The capitals at the tops of the pillars in the [Temple] vestibule were shaped like lilies and were four cubits high," declares 1 Kings 7:19.

Over the centuries the flower came to stand for the city of Jerusalem itself. The Crusaders introduced lilies into European Christian art, because of its association with the Crusaders, the lily came to stand for chivalry, and the French nobility adopted the fleur-de-lis as its symbol. The similarity between the lily on this fourth century B.C.E. coin and the fleur-de-lis is striking.

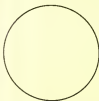
## 305 BCE

### FIRST ROYAL PORTRAIT ▶

MATERIAL: Silver

DENOMINATION: Tetradrachm

SIZE: 1 inch in diameter



OBSERVE



REVERSE

Alexander the Great, the mightiest military leader the ancient world had ever seen, brought an end to Persian rule over Judea when he defeated King Darius in 333 B.C.E. at Issus, in modern Turkey. Following Alexander's sudden death in 323 B.C.E. a power struggle arose in the eastern Mediterranean. In 305 B.C.E. Ptolemy, a former general under

Alexander who had established himself as satrap of Egypt, assumed the title *basileus*, "king." The first in Egypt's long line of Greek monarchs (all of whom were called Ptolemy), he gained control of Judea in 301 B.C.E.

Ptolemy I was the first ruler of Judea to place his own portrait on his coins (some numismatists believe he was the first person ever to mint a

coin with his own likeness). The silver *tetradrachm* (four-*drachm* coin) shown here, from 305 B.C.E., depicts Ptolemy I wearing a diadem, or royal headband. On the reverse, an eagle stands erect on a thunderbolt, encircled by a legend reading "of King Ptolemy." Eagles and thunderbolts were symbols of kingly power in Greece in the Archaic (c. 8th-7th

centuries B.C.E.) and Classical (c. 6th-4th centuries B.C.E.) periods, when they were associated with Zeus, father of the Greek gods and "king" of the pantheon. By using such mythological imagery on his coins, Ptolemy I presented himself as a Greek king in the tradition of Alexander the Great and the Athenian rulers of the fifth century B.C.E.



## 130 BCE

### FIRST JEWISH COIN FROM JERUSALEM

MATERIAL: Bronze

DENOMINATION: Prutah

SIZE: ½ inch in diameter



OBVERSE



REVERSE

SANDY BRUNER

Following the death of Alexander the Great, his empire broke in two: the Ptolemaic kingdom, based in Egypt, ruled the southern half, while the Seleucid kingdom, based in Syria, ruled the northern half. Judea was caught between the two. In the third century B.C.E., the two kingdoms fought five major wars; foreign troops were garrisoned all over Judea. In about 200 B.C.E. the Seleucid king Antiochus III gained control over the region.

This widespread foreign presence led to tensions within the Jewish community between those who wished to adopt Hellenistic ways and those who did not. The situation

was made worse by Antiochus IV, who unleashed a wave of religious persecution in 167 B.C.E. The Jewish response was not long in coming. Led by a priest named Mattathias and his five sons, particularly Judah Maccabee, an armed Jewish revolt eventually succeeded in shaking off foreign rule and establishing, in 142 B.C.E., the first independent Jewish state in nearly half a millennium.

The coin shown here is the first coin to be minted by a Jewish government in Jerusalem. Issued by John Hyrcanus I, the High Priest (the title used by the highest governing Hasmonaean authority at the time),

it evokes the glories of ages past. (The name Hasmonaean comes from an ancestor of Mattathias.) The coin was worth one *prutah*, a loaf of bread cost ten *prutot*. The obverse bears a legend in Paleo-Hebrew script, the script used before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. It reads: "Yehohanan (John) the High Priest and the Council of the Jews." The use of pre-Exilic (before the Babylonian Exile) script was deliberately anachronistic, harkening back to the days of Israel's glory.

On the reverse, in between the horns of a double cornucopia (the "horn of plenty," a fertility symbol taken from Greek iconography), a

small pomegranate can be seen. The pomegranate, also a fertility symbol because of its many seeds, was regularly used as a design element in art and architecture, and dates back at least to the time of Solomon's Temple: "There were two hundred pomegranates in rows all round [the capitals of the Temple]," according to 1 Kings 7:20. The only surviving object that may have come from the First Temple is an inscribed ivory pomegranate, which served as the head of a priest's staff.\*

\*See André Lemaire, "Probable Head of Priestly Scepter From Solomon's Temple Surfaces in Jerusalem," *BAR*, January/February 1984.



SANDY BRUNER



OBVERSE

REVERSE

## 103 BCE

### ◀ FIRST BILINGUAL JEWISH COIN

MATERIAL: Bronze

DENOMINATION: Prutah

SIZE: ¾ inch in diameter



This coin was minted by the Hasmonaean ruler Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.E.), son of John Hyrcanus I, who during his reign gained control of most of the territory of the ancient Davidic kingdom. Like the preceding Hasmonaean coin, this one, too, was worth one *prutah*.

On the obverse, wrapping around an anchor, is the legend in Greek, "of King Alexander" (*Basileos Alexandrou*). Alexander Jannaeus was the first Hasmonaean ruler to claim the title of king. On the reverse around the edge of the coin is a circle that is a stylized representation of a diadem similar

to the one visible on the portrait coin of Ptolemy. Inside the diadem is a star motif, with Paleo-Hebrew letters interspersed among the rays that spell out "Yehonatan (Jonathan, Jannaeus's Hebrew name) the King."

The use of both Greek and Hebrew on this coin indicates the

spread of Hellenistic culture into Judea and also the reassertion of Jewish religious and cultural practices under the Hasmonaean. The tradition of bilingual coins in Judea continues to this day. The modern state of Israel mints coins with legends in both Hebrew and Arabic.



OBVERSE



REVERSE

87/86 BCE

# FIRST TEMPLE TAX COIN

MATERIAL: Silver  
DENOMINATION: Half-Shekel  
SIZE: 1/2 inch in diameter



In the mid-second century B.C.E., the Hasmoneans formalized the payment of an annual Temple tax based on the requirement in Exodus 30:13 that "Each one ... is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary weight ... This half shekel is an offering to the Lord." The first coin to be specified as acceptable payment for this tax—levied on all Jewish males over the age of 20 in Israel and abroad—was the so-called "Shekel of Tyre."

The example shown at left, a silver coin over 1/2 inch in diameter and dating from 87/86 B.C.E., displays on the obverse a bust of Melqart, the god of the Phoenician

city of Tyre, who wears a crown of laurel, and on the reverse, an eagle perching on a ship's prow. The "Shekel of Tyre" poses an intriguing question: Why would such a coin, with its depictions of a pagan deity and a Greco-Roman eagle, be welcomed at the Jewish Temple? Would it be on account of the recognized purity and weight of the coin, or because the Biblical prohibition was interpreted as applying only to the making and worship of graven images, not to their use as coins in commerce? The value of a half-shekel is two Roman *denarii*, which would have paid a vineyard worker for two days' labor.

JEWISH JEWRY



OBVERSE



REVERSE

5 CE

# FIRST JEWISH SELF-PORTRAIT

MATERIAL: Bronze  
DENOMINATION: Not known  
SIZE: 1/2 inch in diameter



Philip (4 B.C.E.-34 C.E.), a son of Herod the Great and the first husband of the infamous dancer Salome, became Roman client ruler over the Galilee after his father's death.

Philip was the first Jewish ruler of Judea to mint a coin bearing a depiction of himself. Because of the Biblical commandment against "graven images," Jewish rulers generally did not place images of people

or animals on their coinage. Herod Philip's realm, however, included a large non-Jewish Syrian population, who would not be offended.

The Herod Philip self-portraits are extremely rare; the example shown here bears the head of Philip surrounded by the legend, in Greek, "Of Philip the Tetrarch" (provincial governor). The reverse depicts a four-column temple with the Greek words for Caesar Augustus.

JEW JEWRY



OBVERSE



REVERSE

SAUDI BRENNE

## 68 CE

### ◀ FIRST SILVER JEWISH COIN

MATERIAL:	Silver
DENOMINATION:	Shekel
SIZE:	¾ inch in diameter

**T**he First Jewish Revolt against Rome (66-70 C.E.), mounted by a disparate band of insurgent groups, posed a grave challenge to Roman authority for four years. The rebels struck a symbolic blow against their oppressors by minting

a coin made of precious metal—the first silver Jewish coin. This “Shekel of Israel,” struck during the second year of the Revolt, displays on the obverse what is thought to be an Omer Cup, a ceremonial vessel used in the Temple for holding

fruits and grain. The reverse depicts three pomegranates possibly attached to the top of a staff (like the ivory pomegranate possibly from Solomon’s Temple). The three legends—in paleo-Hebrew script—read: “Shekel of Israel,”

“Jerusalem the Holy” and “Year Two” (the second year of the Revolt, 68 C.E.). During the Roman period the basic Roman coin denomination was the *denarius*, and a shekel was worth four *denarii*.

## 69 CE

### JUDEA CAPTA COIN ▶

MATERIAL:	Bronze
DENOMINATION:	Sestertius
SIZE:	¾ inch in diameter



ZEVI RADOVAN

OBVERSE



REVERSE

**T**he First Jewish Revolt was largely crushed by the Roman army under the leadership of Vespasian, who served first as the Roman commander in Judea and then as emperor from 69 to 79 C.E. Beginning in his first year as emperor,

Vespasian minted a series of victory coins; among these is the first coin to bear the word *Judeaea* in the legend. (The coin shown here was struck in 71 C.E.) Vespasian’s bronze *sestertius* (a quarter of a *denarius*) bears a portrait of the laurel-wreathed emperor

with the Latin legend “Im[perator] Caes[ar] Vespas[i]an Aug[ustus],” “Leader Caesar Vespasian Augustus” (the last word is a title meaning “revered”). On the other side is a haunting picture of a Roman soldier dominating a captive woman

slumped beside a palm tree. She is a personification of Judea, which was once again subservient to Rome. Vespasian’s son Titus (emperor from 79–81 C.E.) completed his father’s campaign, laying waste to the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E.



ISRAEL MUSEUM/PETER LAMOT



OBVERSE



REVERSE

## 70 CE

### ◀ RARE YEAR 5 OF REVOLT COIN

MATERIAL:	Silver
DENOMINATION:	Shekel
SIZE:	¾ inch in diameter

**A**s the preceding coin shows, already in 69 C.E. the Romans had the upper hand in suppressing the Jewish Revolt. Nonetheless, even in 70 C.E., the Revolt’s fifth year, some rebels were continuing to hold out. The best known among them

were the rebels at Masada, the mountaintop palace and fortress built by Herod the Great. As this rare Year 5 coin shows, the Jewish rebels were still minting coins even at this late stage of the rebellion. Yigael Yadin, who excavated Masada in the

1960s, found 17 Revolt coins in one hoard, including three Year 5 coins (only six other Year 5 coins had been previously found). Yadin’s finds were the first Revolt coins to be discovered in a controlled archaeological excavation.

The Year 5 coin shown here depicts on its front a chalice with the words “Shekel of Israel” and the letters *shin* and *heh*, abbreviations for “Year 5.” On the reverse are pomegranates surrounded by the words “Jerusalem the Holy.”

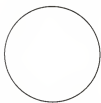
## 132 CE

### FIRST BAR-KOKHBA COIN ▷

MATERIAL: Silver

DENOMINATION: Sela

SIZE: 1 inch in diameter



Sixty-two years after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, Shimon Bar-Kokhba (or Kosiba, as we know from contemporaneous inscriptions) led the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome (often called the Bar-Kokhba Revolt). The new revolutionary government, like the one that had seized power two generations before, immediately minted silver coinage. Their large silver *sela* coin (like the *shekel*, equal to four Roman *denarii*), struck in Year 3 of the Revolt, or 134 C.E., features the façade of the destroyed Jerusalem Temple, with perhaps the Ark of the Covenant visible within. The legend "Simon" (Shimon in Hebrew) refers to Bar-Kokhba. The reverse depicts a *lulav* and *etrog*, fruit and branches used in the Jewish festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles). About a decade before the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, the yearly rent on a house with a farm was ten *selas*.

A close look at the reverse reveals the ghostly outline of what looks like an imperial head (the nose points to 4 o'clock). In fact, the head is that of Vespasian; his surprising reappearance here is due to the fact that the Bar-Kokhba rebels used circulating Roman currency as "blanks" for their own coins. Under-images like this one can be seen on many coins dating from the time of the Second Jewish Revolt.

The Bar-Kokhba Revolt was crushed in 135 C.E., marking the end of independent Jewish rule until the emergence of the modern state of Israel in 1948.

For more on this subject, see David Hendin, "Guide to Biblical Coins," 4th ed. (New York: Amphora).



OBVERSE



REVERSE

SANDY BREWER







# THE MISTRESS OF STRATIGRAPHY HAD *Clay Feet*

**KATHLEEN KENYON'S  
FLAWED JERUSALEM EXCAVATION**

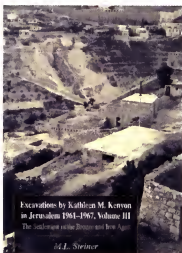
HERSHEL SHANKS

**M**UCH AS ARMIES through the centuries have battled over Jerusalem, so scholars have fought over its history. What, for example, was Jerusalem like in the tenth century B.C.E., a period that the Bible describes as the time of Israel's glory, the age of the United Monarchy, when David and Solomon ruled over Israel and Judah? Despite the Biblical picture of a period of wealth and power, the archaeological evidence from that time is sparse. Some so-called Biblical minimalists have questioned the very existence of the United Monarchy and even of David and Solomon.

Between 1961 and 1967 Dame Kathleen Kenyon, one of the leading archaeologists of her day, led an important excavation in the area of Jerusalem known as the City of David, where the original city was located. She wrote two popular accounts of the work she did there,<sup>1</sup> but, unfortunately, she died in 1978 without publishing her final report. In 1982, a committee from the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem

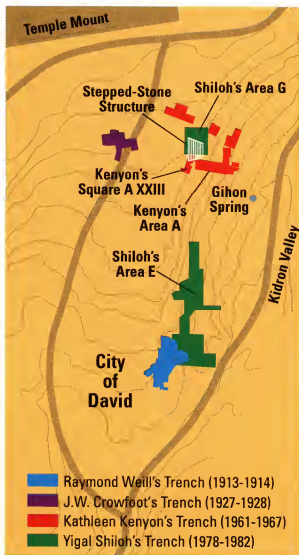
assigned the task of completing a critical part of Kenyon's excavation report to H.J. Franken of Leiden University in Holland. He, in turn, assigned the stratigraphy and pottery analysis to Margreet Steiner, his assistant, who produced the volume under review. With glee she leapt at the opportunity, although she now ruefully writes, "It is a good thing I didn't know then that it would take me almost 20 years to finish the project."<sup>2</sup>

One's first impression of this short book (the actual text, not counting appendices, is only 115 pages, more than 65 of which are taken up by pictures, plans and drawings) is of the censorious light it casts on the great British archaeologist who led the excavation. Steiner "wonder[s] how Kathleen Kenyon would have responded to [this] work," adding, "I hope she smiles upon this book." If Kenyon is indeed looking down from her perch in heaven, she must be furious, for this book documents how incomplete, illegible, sloppy and just plain wrong her excavation records are. Kenyon has



**Excavations by Kathleen M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961–1967, Volume III—The Settlement in the Bronze and Iron Ages**

M.L. Steiner  
(London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001)  
158 pp., \$105, hardback



THOUGH MUCH OF THE CITY OF DAVID—the oldest inhabited area of Jerusalem—is buried beneath modern dwellings and inaccessible to archaeologists, the available areas have been extensively excavated. Kathleen Kenyon's excavations between 1961 and 1967 were the most significant since World War I. A few of the areas where she dug, as well as those excavated by her predecessors and her successor Yigal Shiloh are shown above. Kenyon died in 1978 without writing her final report, which has now been completed by Dutch scholar Margreet Steiner. But Steiner's work casts a new light on the archaeologist whose reputation as a careful excavator is reflected in her moniker, the Mistress of Stratigraphy. Steiner finds Kenyon's work to be sometimes sloppy and her conclusions to be often dubious or dead wrong.

long been known as the "Mistress of Stratigraphy" for her careful, painstaking excavation methods and record keeping, and for having continually drawn cross-sections (known as sections) to preserve a progressive picture of the strata within an excavation square. But some of her field notebooks, we learn from Steiner's volume, are nearly useless because they don't contain the locations of the layers that Kenyon excavated. Deposit numbers and levels are missing from section drawings, making them dif-

ficult, if not impossible, to use. Directional arrows on some of the plans point south instead of north.

Steiner attributes these omissions and mistakes to "slovenliness," adding, however, "that there were more fundamental errors." Kenyon waited until the end of each excavation season, after the field supervisors had already left, to make section drawings (she drew the main sections herself), weakening the connection between her drawings and the data in the field. Plans, too, were drawn only at the end of the season—by a surveyor who plotted the location of every stone without having any notion if those stones had once been part of walls or if they were merely rubble.

It goes on. The pottery was noted on "pottery phasing cards," so that the pottery could be connected to the various phases of each layer or stratum. But often when the phasing was changed, no correction was made on the cards. "This made the use of the phasing and pottery cards for the study of the pottery almost impossible," Steiner writes. She decided simply to "ignore these systems." Furthermore, Kenyon's own handwritten notes are "largely undecipherable."

Kenyon's *conclusions* are also often wrong. For example, a house Kenyon attributed to the Middle Bronze Age (2200-1550 B.C.E.) was really built over half a millennium later, in the Iron Age (1200-587 B.C.E.). A pottery group that was supposed to be "all M[iddle] B[ronze]" actually included Early Bronze (3300-2200 B.C.E.) pottery.

Worst of all, most of the pottery sherds, including diagnostic handles, bases and rims, were simply thrown out. Kenyon saved only "small amounts."

Steiner has re-analyzed the entire stratigraphy of the site. But how much confidence can we have in the re-analysis, and particularly the conclusions, when the basic data are so shaky?

I am also a little uncomfortable with Steiner's consistently negative conclusions based on the absence of evidence. For example, she determines that "Jerusalem was not permanently occupied in the Early Bronze Age." Yet Kenyon found some pottery from this period, as have other excavators before and after her, in cracks and caves. Kenyon herself excavated an Early Bronze Age burial place on the Mount of Olives. Israeli archaeologist Yigal Shiloh, who followed Kenyon in excavating the City of David, even found two Early Bronze

Early Bronze Age	3300–2200 B.C.E.
Middle Bronze Age	2200–1550 B.C.E.
Late Bronze Age	1550–1200 B.C.E.
Iron Age I	1200–1000 B.C.E.
Iron Age II	1000–587 B.C.E.

Age buildings near the Gihon Spring, the settlement's water supply. "One would suppose," Steiner concedes, "that Jerusalem, with its rich spring and fertile wadis, offered an excellent location for a permanent village." Yet Steiner refutes this possibility simply because more evidence hasn't been found—and in this way she does not allow for what may still lie underground or what may have been destroyed by later settlements. All this may not seem important to people interested in the Biblical periods, but it is indicative of a mindset.

In the Middle Bronze Age II period (1800-1550 B.C.E.), Jerusalem was protected by a very substantial wall (about ten feet thick), stretches of which were found by Kenyon (42 feet) and later by Shiloh (88 feet). The existence and date of this wall are among the few matters on which there is widespread agreement. According to an appendix to the Steiner volume by Diny Boas-Vedder, it probably took about two-and-a-half years to build. Recently, excavations by Israeli archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron found more stretches of this wall, together with imposing towers that were built around the Gihon Spring to protect the settlement's water supply.

The settlement enclosed by this fortification wall raises a major question for those who would conclude that there was a substantial settlement in Jerusalem during the time of David and Solomon despite the fact that so little has been found from their time: If so much has been found from the much earlier Middle Bronze Age, why hasn't more been found from the tenth century B.C.E., the time of David and Solomon?

The answer of the nay-sayers is simply that no significant settlement existed here in the tenth century B.C.E. The argument on the other side is that Kenyon did not find that much, either, other than the fortification wall, in the Middle Bronze Age settlement—no domestic structures, no public structures, indeed no buildings at all. Yet here, because of the existence of the wall, Steiner is willing to assume that "a large part of available space inside the fortifications will have been filled by administrative buildings and storage facilities. The existence of one or more temples and several open markets may be assumed as well." If asked to explain why she was willing to make these assumptions, Steiner would reply that, in addition to the wall, a lot of Middle Bronze Age pottery has been found in the excavation, two-thirds of which is represented by storage jars (implying storage facilities) and only one-third by cooking pots. It seems to me that she might as easily have concluded that domestic buildings also existed here, based on the cooking pots. Or she could conclude that the fortifications and quite remarkable water system would imply an administration and organization that would have to be housed in public buildings. In any case, in the Middle Bronze Age, Steiner is willing to imply structures from pots, but not in the Early Bronze Age.

Readers can decide who has the better side of this

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AMONG THE HOARD of cuneiform tablets known as the Amarna letters—correspondence from the royal archives of pharaohs Amenophis III and his son Akhenaten, who reigned during the 14th century B.C.E.—is this tablet, sent by Abdi-Heba, ruler of Jerusalem. That a ruler of Jerusalem was writing an official letter to an Egyptian pharaoh suggests that in the 14th century B.C.E. there was indeed a settlement at Jerusalem—referred to here as "Urusalim" (see the detail of the tablet, above). Unlike most scholars, however, Steiner believes that Urusalim and Jerusalem may not be the same place. And even if the two are identical, she argues, Jerusalem in the 14th century B.C.E. was nothing more than an estate or royal dominion of Egypt, a conclusion also contested by other scholars.

argument and what relevance it has for the Jerusalem of David and Solomon.

Whatever settlement existed here in the Middle Bronze Age was, according to Steiner, soon abandoned. "For reasons unknown, the town ceased to exist after a mere hundred years." Steiner believes that Jerusalem was unoccupied until about the beginning of the 12th century B.C.E. This is the time of transition to the Iron Age. (The Late Bronze Age gave way to Iron Age I, sometimes called the Early Iron Age, in 1200 B.C.E.) In short, no settlement in the Late Bronze Age, says Steiner.



**ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER OR FLOURISHING CITY?** Kenyon's excavations yielded, among other significant finds, this elegant proto-Aeolic capital, 4 feet long and 2 feet wide. The massive and intricately carved capital—which Kenyon dated to the tenth century B.C.E. and which Shiloh subsequently dated to the ninth—probably crowned an important building in its day. Steiner has interpreted the capital, as well as the other architectural remains Kenyon found, as evidence of Jerusalem's public buildings in the tenth-ninth century B.C.E. But because no contemporaneous domestic structures have been discovered, Steiner believes that Jerusalem, in the age of David and Solomon, was a mere administrative center, and not the glorious city depicted in the Bible.

It is true that very little from the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.E.) has been found in Jerusalem. Steiner argues, "Not only architecture, but also pottery and other small finds are missing." But this is not quite true; there is some pottery from the Late Bronze Age, though not very much. This paucity of Late Bronze Age evidence, however, has been used by those who argue in favor of a substantial city here at the time of David and Solomon. Although the absence of archaeological evidence in the 14th century B.C.E. would suggest the absence of a settlement, we know that there was indeed a settlement in Jerusalem at this time, one ruled by a king. We know this from the Amarna letters, a hoard of cuneiform tablets found at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt consisting of diplomatic correspondence to and from pharaohs Amenophis III and his son Akhenaten (Amenophis IV), dynasts who reigned in the 14th century B.C.E. Seven of these letters are from Abdi-Heba, ruler of Jerusalem. So there must have been a settlement here in the 14th century B.C.E. despite the lack of archaeological evidence for such a settlement. In one of the letters Abdi-Heba even speaks of another "town" that belongs to Jerusalem. Some scholars have argued that if Jerusalem was a city-state in the 14th century B.C.E., as the Amarna letters show—despite the paucity of finds from the 14th cen-

tury B.C.E.—the same may be true of the tenth century B.C.E., the time of David and Solomon. We just haven't found much of that city. So the argument runs.

Steiner is not convinced, however, that a substantial settlement existed at Jerusalem in the 14th century B.C.E. For one thing, in the cuneiform of the Amarna letters, the city is spelled *Urusalim*. Maybe this isn't Jerusalem, she suggests.<sup>3</sup> But even if it is, she argues, Jerusalem itself is never referred to as a "town." It could be "an estate, a royal dominion," most likely of the Egyptians. Perhaps, she suggests, it was garrisoned by mercenaries, the very people referred to in the Bible as the Jebusites, from whom David captured the place in about 1000 B.C.E. Abdi-Heba would then simply be the "manager of the estate." In two letters, he refers to himself as "a soldier for the king." According to Steiner, "Abdi-Heba is not so much a local prince as an Egyptian official managing a royal estate for the pharaoh." Jerusalem was simply a "fortified house" in a "rather marginal area, where the pharaoh stationed a military commander to protect the route to Beth Shan, then an important Egyptian garrison town, as well as the route to Moab." Steiner is absolutely sure of her final analysis: "The conclusion that no 'city' existed in Jerusalem during the Late Bronze Age seems unavoidable to me."

Steiner has made these same arguments in the past, and Israel's leading authority on the Amarna letters, Nadav Na'aman, has responded to them on at least two occasions, once in *BAR*.<sup>4</sup> Na'aman notes that in the Amarna letters, Abdi-Heba is referred to as *haz-anu*, which is the title that all the local rulers in the land of Canaan bore. Unless there were no local rulers anywhere, and only Egyptian estate managers, Abdi-Heba was the ruler of Jerusalem. Moreover, Abdi-Heba took his title as a right of dynastic ascent, although

<sup>3</sup>See Nadav Na'aman, "It Is There: Ancient Texts Prove It," *BAR*, July/August 1998. See also Margaret Steiner, "It's Not There: Archaeology Proves a Negative," *BAR*, July/August 1998 and Jane Cahill, "It Is There: The Archaeological Evidence Proves It," *BAR*, July/August 1998.

doubtless with the support of the Egyptian pharaoh. As Abdi-Heba writes to the pharaoh, "The strong arm of the king brought me into my father's house." Moreover, Abdi-Heba refers to his "house" and to another "house," in which 50 Egyptian soldiers were temporarily garrisoned. In addition, Abdi-Heba sends exceptionally rich caravans to the pharaoh, including 5,000 objects (probably silver shekels) and also prisoners to be used as slaves.

There is more: In cuneiform, signs called determinatives (with no phonetic value) tell you what kind of a word they are attached to. A number of different determinatives are used in the Amarna letters to signify that various sites were towns. Jerusalem, too, is frequently designated with one or more of these determinatives. Moreover, Abdi-Heba was apparently quite a mover and shaker. In one letter, he is compared to the infamous king of Shechem, Lab'ayu, who was a prominent statesman and leader bent on military expansion. All this, Na'aman argues, suggests that Jerusalem was much more than a royal estate managed by an Egyptian-appointed steward.\*

Strangely, Steiner does not even attempt to answer Na'aman's arguments in any detail. Although in her bibliography she does list his articles interpreting the Amarna letters, she does not cite them in her text (at

least as far as I can find; she cites only another Na'aman article, on the proposition that Egypt had grain storage facilities in the Jezreel Valley). She does concede, as noted above, that one Amarna letter speaks of another town that belongs to Jerusalem, but, for her, that is not enough to indicate that Jerusalem was a city-state at this time.

In about 1200 B.C.E. a major change occurred in Jerusalem. This is the time of the beginning of the emergence of Israel in Canaan. In Biblical terms, the period between 1200 and 1000 B.C.E. is the period of the Judges. This is followed by the United Monarchy of David and Solomon, beginning in about 1000 B.C.E.

Steiner dates Jerusalem's Stepped Stone Structure—a mammoth installation ("by far the largest and most impressive structure of its kind")—to 1200 B.C.E., the beginning of the period of the Judges. Kenyon and Shiloh, who both excavated the structure, suggest different dates. The Stepped Stone Structure is built against the eastern slope of the City of David above the Kidron Valley and consists of at least seven terraces. Kenyon

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MAMMOTH** Stepped Stone Structure, on the eastern slope of the City of David, took place around 1200 B.C.E., a time of significant change in Jerusalem—when the Israelites began to emerge in Canaan. Rising more than 65 feet above the Kidron Valley, the structure consists of at least seven terraces. But though the impressive installation suggests the existence of a significant settlement in the 12th century B.C.E., Steiner clings to a less glamorous (some would say bizarre) interpretation of the structure's purpose: It was built, she says, to fill in a gully.



ZIV MADHAN





ZEV RADWAN

WITH HIS HANDS SEEMINGLY TIED in front of him, this bearded man, dating to the tenth-ninth century B.C.E., was discovered by Shiloh during his excavation of the City of David. The object probably once adorned a ceramic cult stand and was found along with other items from this period, including a bronze fist, perhaps that of a god. Though conceding that these objects can be deemed luxury items, Steiner nonetheless believes that tenth-century B.C.E. Jerusalem was not a capital city and asserts that the United Monarchy (the Kingdom of David and Solomon) "is not an historical fact," a conclusion that many scholars believe is wrong.

thought terraces like these covered the entire east slope of the hill, but, as Steiner notes, in this she was wrong. Rather, the Stepped Stone Structure "must have looked like a stepped pyramid, its 'steps' descending from the top of the hill." More than 65 feet in height and twice that in width, it represents what remains of the base of the structure that was built on top—probably some sort of fortress. An outpost from which to guard the approach may have been set up on Terrace 3, the only one wide enough (25 feet) to accommodate a building. Doesn't this huge structure imply a quite substantial

settlement in the 12th century B.C.E.? This thought also occurred to Steiner: "The question must be raised why such an enormous task was undertaken." She has an answer, however: This massive structure was constructed to fill in a gully. That, she says, is her "inevitable conclusion." But why did the 12th-century B.C.E. inhabitants of Jerusalem want to fill in a gully? To answer that question, she concedes, would involve pure "speculation." Perhaps, she says, this area was the northern defense line of the city. The settlement itself "consisted of only one large building." Steiner's confidence is hardly justified.

Steiner's bottom line on the tenth century B.C.E., the time of David and Solomon and the United Monarchy, is somewhat left of center. She disagrees with the minimalists. But she also finds the Biblical characterization a gross exaggeration: The Jerusalem of David and Solomon was "neither a large city nor a small provincial town. It rather seems that Jerusalem was an administrative centre of at least regional importance, the newly built capital of a newly established political entity." Elsewhere she calls it "a small fortified town."

One serious problem in identifying tenth-century B.C.E. material is that it is often indistinguishable from ninth-century B.C.E. material. As Steiner tells us, "Many [pottery] shapes were produced over centuries." Moreover, "The introduction of a new type [of pottery] took place in a centre, from where it dispersed slowly. Thus, a type may have occurred in one place in great quantities, while it was still unknown at other sites." Add to this the fact that one leading Israeli archaeologist, Israel Finkelstein, has argued for down-dating traditional tenth-century B.C.E. pottery to the ninth.\* In these circumstances, it would seem speculative to date Jerusalem pottery conclusively to the tenth century B.C.E. rather than the ninth century B.C.E.

With this caveat in mind, Steiner ascribes numerous significant finds to the tenth century B.C.E. One of these is an imposing casemate wall (only a small section has been found). A casemate wall consists of two parallel walls divided by cross-walls forming casemates, or small rooms. Each of the parallel walls at Jerusalem is more than 6 feet wide. The area between the wall is more than 4 feet wide. On the fill between the walls some sherds were found, "all dating to the tenth/ninth century B.C." If actually tenth-century B.C.E., it may be that Solomon built a new defensive wall to protect the northern part of Jerusalem, connecting with the palace and Temple on the Temple Mount. Steiner asks whether markets and festivals may not have been held in this new northern section of the city, south of the Temple Mount, protected by the new wall.

Among the debris from this period, Kenyon also found some fairly fancy ashlar (squared stones) that were typical

*continues on page 70*

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\*See Hershel Shanks, "A 'Centrist' at the Center of Controversy," *B&R*, November/December 2002.



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**In a popular and punchy book, one of archaeology's superstars integrates the Bible with ancient Israel's material culture—but offers little new evidence to further the debate.**

**What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel**

William G. Dever  
(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001)  
313 pp., \$25 hardcover, \$21 paperback

Reviewed by Ilan Sharon

The contest for ancient Israel grows fast and furious. The battle between the "maximalists" and the "minimalists" is about nothing less than the historicity of the Bible. The minimalists—centered mainly in Sheffield, England, and Copenhagen, Denmark—deny, in a nutshell, that the Old Testament is a historical document and claim that it is basically a work of theological fiction, composed not in the Iron Age (12th–6th centuries B.C.E.) but in the Persian or Hellenistic period (fourth–third centuries B.C.E.). It contains, they argue, little or no reliable information about the period it ostensibly describes.

The minimalists may have scored a knockdown with the publication of Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman's *The Bible Unearthed* (reviewed in BAR, March/April 2001). But now a heavyweight from the other camp has stepped into the ring: William G. Dever—doyen of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, battle-hardened veteran of many intellectual campaigns and Biblical archaeology's ablest spokesman and defender.

Judging by the words of praise on the jacket of his latest book, Dever has a scholarly "dream team" squarely in his corner, each an acknowledged champion in his own right: Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar, Lawrence E. Stager, David Noel Freedman and Baruch Halpern. Dever's opponents stand ready in the other corner, equally determined to win: Philip R. Davies, Thomas L. Thompson, Keith W. Whitelam, Niels Peter Lemche and Israel Finkelstein. The heavyweights are in the ring, the gloves are off and no holds are barred. We're in for quite a spectacle!

But before we get to the blow-by-blow, a few preliminary comments:

Though Dever's book has been 35 years in the making, it was actually written, with great urgency, in just 23 days. It is meant to be a popular book, which its author admits is "polemic, and over-simplistic at times." The book's publication coincides with Dever's retirement after more than 25 years of teaching at the University of Arizona, where he created, practically by himself, a prominent school of Syro-Palestinian archaeology.

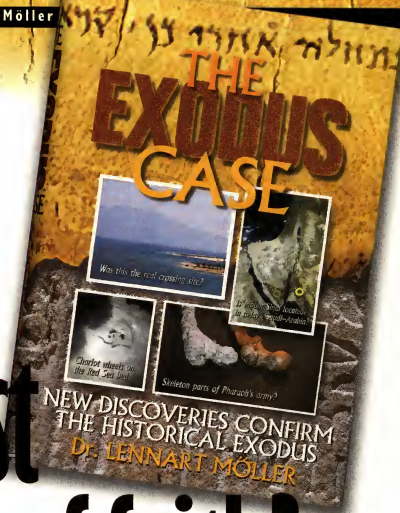
Throughout, Dever's homiletical (as he himself puts it) prose is witty and charismatic, impassioned, sometimes vicious, always coming from, and reaching to, the heart and the gut. More of a battle cry than a detached analysis, the book is anything but "the most reasonable ... well balanced ... evaluation of the historicity of the Biblical narratives," as Mazar claims on the book's jacket.

If you are looking for new data (or even new insights) regarding archaeology or the Bible, you won't find them here. The examples and arguments presented are textbook cases that can be found elsewhere—principally in Dever's own previous work, which is liberally quoted throughout the book; furthermore, the abundant references to the work of others point mainly to textbooks and anthologies rather than to primary research. For long-time Dever fans like myself, the fascination of this present book is in seeing how the diverse topics he has covered during his career—not to mention his sometimes seemingly contradictory ideas, such as his crusade against the term "Biblical archaeology" on the one hand, and his obvious passion for the Bible and archaeology, on the other—come together to form a unified tapestry.

But Dever's book could have done with much more critical editing. In one passage he discusses a large storage jar from southern Palestine. The pot, however, belongs not in the Iron Age IIC period, but in Iron Age IIB. It is from Tell Beit Mirsim and not from Lachish, though identical pots were found in great numbers in Lachish. The

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stamp impressions on some of these jars read *mmst* and not *mmst*. The jar pictured in the text has a larger capacity than the five gallons Dever claims. This is but one example of the book's sloppiness.

Nevertheless, Dever comes out of his corner swinging, in classic Dever style. In the very first chapter, the opposition is described as "bankrupt," "mean spirited" and "perilously close to anti-Semitism." By round two he has really gotten going—he administers a crushing blow to each of his opponents, one by one. Davies is "an example of British eccentricity," Thompson "an 'outsider' for many years, never accepted by the ... establishment." Whitelam's "statements border dangerously on anti-Semitism." As for Lemche, Dever writes: "Don't bother [him] ... with facts. ... [His] mind is made up." Finkelstein is characterized as someone who "changed his mind not on the basis of empirical data, but simply out of an inherent iconoclasm [and] ... a sense of political correctness."

Dever then whacks all of his opponents as a group: "All the revisionists, in my opinion, are rapidly becoming: philologists—with no pertinent texts; historians—with no history; theologians—with no empathy with religion; ethnographers—with no recognizable 'ethnic groups,' no training and no field experience; anthropologists—with no theory of

culture and cultural change; literary critics—with little coherent concept of literary production; archaeologists with no independent knowledge or appreciation of material culture remains."

These blows are not all above the belt. And if Dever believes that it is facts and reasoned argument that eventually lead to the discovery of objective truth, he should perhaps bind himself to a different etiquette. Of course, he is quite right when he says that he didn't start the fight with the minimalists. After all, Dever writes, it was Lemche and Thompson who alleged that Avraham Biran's "House of David" inscription is a forgery; it was Thompson who characterized Dever as a Christian fundamentalist and accused him of deliberately falsifying archaeological data; it was Whitelam who charged American and Israeli archaeologists with colluding in an "elders of Zion" conspiracy to "dispossess Palestinians of a land and a past."

In the core of his book, Dever describes what he calls convergences between Biblical text and archaeological finds, and in so doing hopes to demonstrate that the only possible *Sitz im Leben* (setting) for that text is in the Iron Age. Again, all of the case studies are well known and have been argued back and forth in previous literature. Also, remember that the author forewarned the reader that the issues would be

simplified for the sake of the argument. And though Dever does not exactly cover up the deficiencies some critics have pointed out in some of his arguments, he does not call attention to these deficiencies, either.

Take, for example, Dever's discussion of the well-known city gate and walls of Gezer, which Yigael Yadin compared to nearly identical gates and walls at Hazor and Megiddo. Yadin believed that 1 Kings 9:15–17 referred to these structures; the passage describes how Solomon fortified Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo. Dever, however, neglects to caution the reader that Yadin's attribution of these gates to Solomon is greatly undermined by the finding of similar gates in later contexts—at Lachish and Tel Ira.

Dever uses ceramic evidence to date the Gezer gate to the tenth century B.C.E., but his argument over-simplifies matters, for pottery cannot provide a stratum with an absolute date. At most it can provide a context within a sequence of changing stylistic periods. There is no *intrinsic* evidence to support Dever's argument that the destruction of stratum VIII at Gezer was caused by Pharaoh Sheshonq I (the Biblical Shishak) in 925 B.C.E., during his famous campaign through Judah and Israel.

And what of the evidence concerning the raid of Shishak mentioned in 1 Kings? Can a convergence be established in this case

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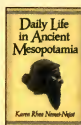
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between Biblical text and archaeological fact? Shishak's commemorative relief and text at Karnak lists 154 towns destroyed by the Egyptian army. Following Yohanan Aharoni, Dever reconstructs the route of Shishak's raid and comes up with his own list of 14 strata that were probably destroyed during this raid. But of the 154 places named on Shishak's list, only three or four (the reading of Gezer on this list is disputed) appear in Dever's table as having relevant strata presumably destroyed by the pharaoh. At two sites (Megiddo and Beth-Shean), the excavators noted no destruction debris in the relevant phases (c. 930-925 B.C.E.). As for the remaining ten strata that Dever calls ostensibly "Shishakite" destructions, none of these places is mentioned by Shishak. Some (for example, Hazor, Tel Abu Hawam, Tell Keisan and Tel Mevorakh) are not even on the campaign route Dever reconstructs. Might all of this be taken as evidence of *divergence* rather than convergence?

One significant question is missing from Dever's overall argument: Why, as the minimalists claim, are the Persian and/or Hellenistic periods *not* appropriate *Sitze im Leben* for the writing of the Bible? Only briefly does Dever refer to this question; as this discussion is central to his argument, he perhaps should have amplified it.

But returning to our bout. We are in the last round, and Dever goes on the attack again, dismissing Biblical minimalism as a postmodern phenomenon. Here we need to digress a little for the sake of those of us not up to date on Foucault and Derrida. The term "post-modernism" is a play on words. Modernism here refers not only to what is novel but also to the *belief* in modernity. Throughout most of the 19th and 20th centuries, many intellectuals in Europe and the United States clung to the notion of progress. Mankind was believed to be advancing from a primitive past to an enlightened future; the disparate cultures of the old world were destined to merge into an inclusive modern culture. Two world wars and one hole-in-the-ozone later, we are deeply skeptical. Caught in the whirlwind of technological advancement, we are suspicious of where all this progress is leading us. Alternative medicines, anti-globalism, Dadaism and Surrealism in art and literature, conspiracy theories, the rise of the conservation movement—all these disparate phenomena are part of postmodernism.

But what does a popular intellectual movement have to do with Biblical minimalism? Plenty, Dever argues. According to him, the minimalists, like the postmodernists, refuse to take any authoritative voice at face value. They reject any hegemony. They search constantly for hidden agendas and power

plays. They believe that the work of literary criticism is more valid and important than the literature being examined. They accept any interpretation of a text, Dever writes, no matter how absurd or even atrocious, as long as it champions some marginalized racial, ethnic or sexual minority. In this way, the minimalists seek to undermine both the Biblical writers and the dominant schools of Biblical and archaeological research, which are viewed as middle-class-American-Jewish-fundamentalist-sexist conspiracies.

The best of postmodernism, however, is by and large missing in the Biblical minimalist literature. Deconstruction, metaphor and humor all have their place in scientific discourse. But the sense of deep irony that characterizes much postmodernist thinking is lost on most minimalists. For the most part, these minimalists are a dour and pompous lot.

But now we get to the main question: Is a literary slugging match the proper way to settle the debate between those who believe in an Iron Age setting for the Hebrew Bible and those who reject this notion? Perhaps. But for those who crave empirical evidence, rhetoric has its limits. Given two opposing theories, one should devise *critical tests*—testable hypotheses the results of which would refute one of the challenging theories and vindicate the other—and then go out into the field to collect *fresh* data with which to settle the issue. It is through this empirical approach that archaeology can make its greatest contribution to the historical sciences. When challenged by the minimalists, archaeologists should have gone back to the drawing board—the excavation pits, the pottery shed, the records office. Of the veritable deluge of papers written on this subject in the last ten years (my running bibliography has over 100 entries, at least six of them book-length), precious few have as much as a pottery plate of new archaeological evidence, not to mention new methodologies and analyses. Calling someone a "triumphalist" or "Zionist" (or, alternatively, a "nihilist" or "anti-Semite") is simply not enough.

So, if you have a hankering for intellectual blood sport, this book is definitely for you. If you want to know what the fight between minimalists and maximalists is all about, this is a good introduction (but make sure you read a defense of the other side, too). And for the archaeologists among us: How about going out and collecting—and publishing—some new evidence?

*Ilan Sharon is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the director of the Dor excavation.*

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## Queries & Comments

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inkwell in BAR ("A Hub of Scribal Activity?" September/October 1994), two previous proprietors of these items called Mr. Schoyen. An American collector called him during September and told him that he had bought this inkwell directly from Allegro in 1963. The next owner, Fayez Baraket of Los Angeles, confirmed by phone that Allegro had owned both the altar and the inkwell, which were then both acquired by Baraket in 1975 and then resold.

Before Schoyen bought these two items in 1994, he brought a picture of the inkwell to Kando in Jerusalem and asked him if he remembered it. Kando replied in the affirmative: This inkwell was found by Bedouin at Qumran just before the archaeologists started working at the site, and he had obtained it from the Bedouin and then sold it to John Allegro around 1953. In 1994 Kando certainly had no commercial interest in "faking" a Qumran provenance or ownership to Allegro.

The Copper Scroll exhibition in Manchester in 1997 featured both Schoyen's inkwell and one of John Allegro's scroll jars from Qumran. During the festive opening of the exhibition, Schoyen asked a close relative of John Allegro (he does not remember if it was Allegro's widow or daughter) about the inkwell. She answered that Allegro over time had in his possession so many pots and different items from Qumran and elsewhere that it was impossible for her to remember such particulars.

Thus, Mr. Schoyen and I tend to cling to our version of the hands through which the altar and the inkwell may have passed through the decades.

My article discusses whether one should trust Kando's information on the site where the altar and inkwell were found. Parallel findings and the cultural context suggest that his information may be trusted. As I conclude in a more scholarly article on the subject (Dead Sea Discoveries 1 [2002]), "The altar and the inkwell could very well derive from Qumran, so that Kando's information on this point could be correct." At the same time, the altar and its "cousins" demonstrate how similar habits of divine service were used by Jews, Christians and heathen of the early centuries.

## Potpourri

### GIGO Goes Biblical

A computer-generated portrait of Jesus (Strata, January/February 2003)??? It

could just as well have been a high-tech portrait of John the Baptist, or maybe Judas, or the Pharisee Nicodemus, or the Samaritan woman. As with all computer programs, Garbage In = Garbage Out.

John Walker  
Kingwood, Texas

### It Was a Brick After All

In "Did Kenyon Find the Earliest Mankala Game?" (Queries & Comments, January/February 2003, p. 68) Walter Zanger reproduces plate 11B (page 113) in *Digging Up Jericho* by Kathleen Kenyon and claims that it was mislabeled by Kenyon as "a thumb-impressioned Neolithic brick" but was actually a Mankala game board.

Zanger gave some tenuous arguments, including the lack of any need for indentations on bricks to hold the mortar (this is not true, as even many modern bricks today have indentations). But the question is easily solved if Zanger reads Kenyon's book more carefully and flips to page 135, plate 33, which clearly shows "a wall of thumb-impressed bricks" made from the same type of brick.

Furthermore, Zanger's reference to the textual discussion of the bricks on page 55 is incomplete, as he omits to state that the bricks were found in a wall. It would be quite odd for Neolithic Jerichoites to build a wall from Mankala board games instead of bricks.

Notwithstanding that Jerichoites may possibly have played Mankala on the bricks, we should call a brick a brick and leave it at that.

Chris Chin  
Singapore

### Not an Insult, But Kindness

I have read, with disbelief and shock, the letter of Tim Philabaum on the "final insult" [suggesting that the sponge offered to Jesus on the cross had been used in a toilet—Ed.] (Queries & Comments, January/February 2003, p. 10).

The Romans crucified thousands of Jews, including Jesus, during the first century C.E. If evidence of Roman bestiality were ever needed, crucifixion would be it. It was a charitable act by some Jewish ladies to give these poor souls hanging on a Roman cross some sour vinegar to dull their pain. It was not a depraved act by some mean people to inflict further pain.

Naim S. Mahlab  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

### It's Not Greek to Him

Contrary to Hershel Shanks's claim, it wasn't difficult to infer the meaning of the word *epagomenal*, from the Greek *epagin*, "to lead" or "to bring in" (ReViews, November/December 2002).

*Epagomenal* was not in the somewhat dated edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) that I consulted. The dictionary did have, however, the word *epagemic*, meaning, of course, "intercalated," and this obviously must have been what the authors of the book under review meant by their word.

It only remains now for Shanks to check the most recent edition of the OED for the word *epagomenal*, and if it is still lacking, to report it to the OED as a new word, citing its first use, for inclusion in the next edition.

G.E. Werner  
Edgewood, New Mexico

### Bullae Market

Hershel Shanks's column "The Mystery of the Bullae," (First Person, January/February 2003) mentions that almost none of the known bullae come from legal archaeological excavations, except for 51 bullae from the City of David found by Yigal Shiloh. In a lecture I attended, Andrea Berlin stated that in her first season at Tel Kedesh her team found 1,648 bullae (I don't know why I remember that exact number). They later found close to another thousand bullae in a different area of the site. You can revise the number of bullae with known provenance from 51 to more than 2,500.

Ed Schoch  
Los Angeles, California

*The extraordinary discovery of a cache of 2,500 bullae, uncovered by Sharon Herbert and Andrea Berlin at Tel Kedesh, in northern Israel, will be the subject of an upcoming article in BAR—Ed.*

### Correction

The article "Will Marty Abegg Ever Find a Job?" (January/February 2003) discussed at length a symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls held in October 2001 but did not name the sponsor of the event. It was the Crisler Biblical Institute, of Carmel, California.

The photo in our WorldWide section of the March/April 2003 issue (p. 72) should have been credited to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



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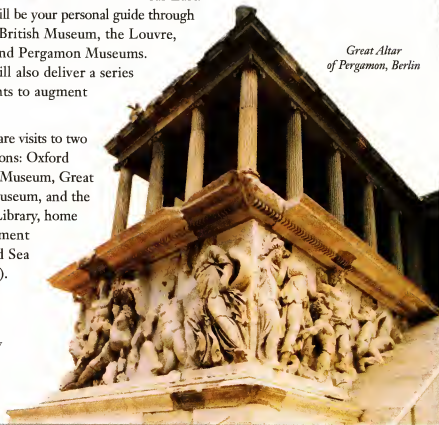
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## Mounds

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form was prepared. Around it the crowd chanted laments. Perhaps there were a few speeches, and then a huge fire was ignited in memory of the deceased monarch. Afterward each participant took a basket of stones and dirt and piled the material within rings of stone walls in order to cover the place of burning, forming a large artificial memorial mound.

It is interesting that there are 19 (or 20) of these mounds. Between kings David and Zedekiah, the last king of the House of David, there were 21 kings. The existence of, say, 40 mounds—not to mention only one or two—would create a problem for my interpretation. Even if some of the kings were not honored with a memorial mound (as the Book of Chronicles says with regard to Jehoram), or even if some other high official was honored in this way, the number of mounds more or less fits with the number of kings of Judah. It is not proof, but it is a detail to bear in mind.<sup>9</sup>

I first offered this interpretation of the Jerusalem tumuli at an archaeological congress in Israel in 1975 and received a very positive response. Still, I was in doubt.

The opportunity to test the idea came in 1983, exactly 60 years after Albright's tumulus excavation and 30 years after that of Amiran. I received a telephone call from the Jerusalem district archaeologist Dan Bahat telling me that the neighborhood of Kiryat Menahem wanted to enlarge its community center, which stands very close to tumulus 4, one of the largest and best-preserved of the mounds. A small salvage dig would be required before building could

begin. Did I want to do it?

For one week in February 1983 in the freezing cold, battered by rain and even snow, I went to the tumulus with a group of my students from the American Institute of Holyland Studies (now the Jerusalem University College). I started the excavation on the northeastern side, closest to the area endangered by expansion of the community center. I also recalled that the platform in the mini-tumulus, the pit and the stairs found by Amiran in tumulus 5 were on the eastern side. Moreover, since the mounds were all west of Jerusalem, they were approached on their eastern flanks by people coming from the city. Therefore we anticipated that the main activity took place on that side. We excavated a trench parallel to the bottom of the mound, and then we excavated three 5-by-5-meter squares up the slope.

We quickly hit pay dirt—a concentration of restorable storage jars, bowls and jugs, and what seemed to be the place of burning, as indicated by the presence of dark soil. Architecturally, we excavated an ancient foundation trench cut in the bedrock for the outer perimeter wall. We also found ring walls, each of decreasing diameter, from the base to the top, which retained the stone and earth fill that created the mound. There were also radial walls perpendicular to the ring walls. (Kara-georghis found the same construction technique in his tumulus 77 at Salamis.)

Among the pottery were two so-called l'melek handles. L'melek jar handles are stamped with four Hebrew letters, LMLK, meaning "[belonging] to the king," and the

continues on page 68

## Authors



Gabriel Barkay ("Mounds of Mystery," p. 32) is a senior lecturer in the Department of Archaeology and Land of Israel Studies at Bar-Ilan University. He has participated in numerous digs during a career spanning nearly four decades. In 1996 Barkay was honored with the Jerusalem Prize, in recognition of outstanding achievements in the archaeology of Jerusalem. His last article for BAR was "What's an Egyptian Temple Doing in Jerusalem?" (May/June 2000).

Sandy Brenner ("Spending Your Way through Jewish History," p. 46) is a director of the Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation, which supports educational and social service projects. He has degrees from Carleton College and the College of William and Mary. Brenner has published articles on Judean numismatics in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, *The Celator* and other periodicals. His educational Web site, devoted to learning the history of Israel through coins, can be found at [www.JerusalemCoins.com](http://www.JerusalemCoins.com).



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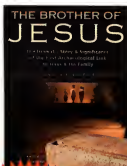
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## Mounds

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name of one of four cities, plus either a winged scarab (a beetle) or a winged sun-disk. One of the Imlekhh handles found in tumulus 4 was stamped with a four-winged scarab, and the other was stamped with a two-winged sun-disk. Imlekhh handles were produced only during the reign of King Hezekiah, probably in connection with preparations for the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E. (see 2 Kings 18:13-19:36 and 2 Chronicles 1-22). They are royal seals, probably attesting to the official stamp of approval of the contents of the jar. There is no question as to their date.

We also found two other jar handles with incised concentric circles, which also date to the same time—the end of the eighth or the very beginning of the seventh century B.C.E. Therefore, tumulus 4 belongs to the time of King Hezekiah, and if our interpretation presented in this article is correct, this is the very place where the memorial ceremony for him, mentioned in 2 Chronicles 32:33, took place.

In antiquity this tumulus was much wider than it is today, as we know from some foundation and retaining walls discovered about 15 feet from the present foot of the mound. It was also probably much higher. About 50 percent of the mound disappeared due to erosion because its stones were robbed in later periods to construct agricultural terraces on nearby hills. Even today, on top of the mound, there are almond trees and grapevines once cultivated by Arab villagers.

Although tumulus 4 dates to the end of the eighth or the very beginning of the seventh century B.C.E., Albright, who was often very right about dates, dated his tumulus to the eleventh-tenth centuries B.C.E., and Ruth Amiran found seventh-

century B.C.E. material at tumulus 5. Perhaps each of the tumuli was built at a different time. The Bible seems to indicate that the memorial ceremonies for the kings of Judah stretched over the entire four centuries of the existence of the kingdom: King Asa reigned in the late tenth to early ninth century B.C.E.; King Jehoram, who didn't get a fire in his honor, died in the ninth century B.C.E.; King Hezekiah's memorial ceremony took place in the early seventh century B.C.E.; and King Zedekiah's fire (which was prophesied by Jeremiah, but which did not take place), would have occurred in the early sixth century B.C.E.

Each of the mounds may have been the site of a memorial ceremony following the death of a particular king of Judah. ☐

<sup>1</sup>Charles F. Tyrwhitt Drake, "Reports," *PEF Quarterly Statement* 1874, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>William F. Albright, "Interesting Finds in Tumuli Near Jerusalem," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 10 (1923), pp. 1-3. See also Louis H. Vincent, "Fouilles de l'Ecole americaine," *Revue Biblique* 33 (1924), pp. 420-421, and Leona Glidden Running and David Noel Freedman, *William Foxwell Albright, A Twentieth-Century Genius* (New York: Morgan Press, 1975), pp. 112-113.

<sup>3</sup>Ruth B.K. Amiran, "The Tumuli West of Jerusalem, Survey and Excavations, 1953," *Israel Exploration Journal* 8 (1958), pp. 205-227.

<sup>4</sup>Running and Freedman, p. 179. Ruth Amiran's dig was also visited by W. F. Albright in 1953.

<sup>5</sup>Amiran, "Tumuli West of Jerusalem," pp. 226-227. <sup>6</sup>Zeev Yeivin, "Excavations at Tumulus No. 3 in Jerusalem," *Eretz-Israel* 25 (Joseph Aviram Volume) (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 175-183 (Hebrew). English summary, pp. 94\*-95.\*

<sup>7</sup>Vassos Karageorghis, *Excavations in the Necropolis of Salamis*, Vol. III (Cyprus, Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, 1973), pp. 128-202 and further details in the illustrations in Cyprus. See also Vassos Karageorghis, *Salamis in Cyprus: Hellenistic and Roman* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), pp. 151-164.

<sup>8</sup>Additional indirect evidence comes from another passage in Jeremiah, about the burial of King Jehoashim (who ruled 609-598 B.C.E.). Jeremiah speaks of a lament, which, according to the prophet, would not be heard when the king dies: *Hoi abi, v'hoi abot, hoi adon v'hoi hodo* ("alas brother and alas sister alas master and alas his majesty") (Jeremiah 22:18).

<sup>9</sup>This interpretation of the tumuli as ceremonial mounds for the kings of Judah opens a window on an enigmatic verse in Jeremiah that speaks of the punishment God will inflict on Babylon for the wicked things it did to Zion (Jeremiah 51:24). God calls Babylon a "mountain of destruction" (*har hamashchit*). Then God goes on to say that he will make Babylon into a "burnt mountain" (*har trefa*) from which neither a "cornerstone or a foundation stone" will be taken (Jeremiah 51:25). *Sefra* is the same term used in the many verses previously cited for the great fire made in memory of the kings of Judah. Our new interpretation of the making of a bonfire as part of the memorial ceremony for the kings of Judah and the piling after the ceremony of earth and rocks into a mound offers a possible explanation for this puzzling verse in Jeremiah. The mounds were named "mountain of burning" and people were not allowed to take any stones from them for construction or any other purpose.

## First Person

continued from page 8

known as the Getty Kouros, in 1984. It reportedly paid approximately \$8 million. Today that would be the equivalent of \$25 million or more. A debate still rages as to whether it is a fake. Many attempts were made to try to determine the issue scientifically. Among other things, the Getty scientists tried to fake the patina on the marble statue. They succeeded in doing this—as far as the naked eye could tell. What they created was visually just like real patina. But they could not reproduce the microstructure! The faked patina was detectable.

That's what we know at the present time. And that provides the context for our contest. We hope Professor Goren and Professor Chadwick will both enter, along with many others. Be sure to consult the contest rules on page 31.

Incidentally, the Jehoash Inscription is now in the hands of the Israel Antiquities Authority, who will appoint two committees of experts to study it, one of Biblical and epigraphical scholars and the other of geological scientists. The mysterious inscription was located after a two-month police search. It was turned over to the police by Oded Golan, the same collector who owns the famous bone box (or ossuary) inscribed "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." However, Golan denies that he is the owner of the Jehoash Inscription. By the time this appears in print, we may know who is.

One other similarity between the two inscriptions: The Jehoash Inscription was wrapped in bubble wrap for its trip from Tel Aviv to the Jerusalem office of the Israel Antiquities Authority. On the way, it broke in two, along a previously existing crack-line. Readers will remember that the James ossuary also broke, on its flight from Tel Aviv to Toronto—while it was protected only by layers of bubble wrap.

One important difference between the Jehoash Inscription and the James ossuary inscription is that leading paleographers and Biblical scholars are confident the Jehoash Inscription is a forgery, while all experienced paleographers specializing in the Second Temple period who have opined on the issue find no reason to doubt the authenticity of the James ossuary on paleographical grounds. However, the issues regarding the patina are almost the same on both the Jehoash Inscription and the James ossuary.

\*See Andre Lemaire, "Burial Box of James the Brother of Jesus," *BAR*, November/December 2002.

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Lapatin, "Proof? The Case of the Getty Kouros," *Source, Notes in the History of Art*, Fall 2000.

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## Kenyon

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of public buildings of the tenth/ninth century B.C.E. She even found the remains of a wall built of such ashlar. In addition, a large and elegant proto-Aeolic capital from this period obviously came from a very impressive public building. Shiloh, however, dated this capital to the ninth rather than the tenth century B.C.E.

The tenth/ninth century B.C.E. also saw some reworking of the Stepped Stone Structure of the 12th century B.C.E. "Whoever came to Jerusalem from the east saw this 27 meter [88 feet] high 'tower' in front of them"—a scary sight indeed. "This bastion protected this vulnerable [northeast] corner of the town [the northern side being the only one not protected by deep valleys], while at the same time guarding the [water source at the Gihon] spring." This Stepped Stone Structure may be the mysterious Millo that the Bible says both David and Solomon fortified (see 2 Samuel 5:9 and 1 Kings 9:15, 24, among other passages).

That the pottery Kenyon found and dated to the tenth century B.C.E. may well date to the ninth century B.C.E. is only one problem, says Steiner. There simply is not much of it. Whether it wasn't there to begin with or was thrown out, however, we're not sure. "Almost none [of it] bears the dark red slip layers," Steiner notes, "traditionally ascribed to the tenth century."

Steiner also mentions several "luxury items" from this period discovered in Shiloh's later excavation of the area, for example, a bronze fist, perhaps belonging to a god, and a large pottery stand portraying a bearded man.

But neither Kenyon nor Shiloh discovered any domestic structures. Because of this, Steiner finds that the town must have functioned only "as a regional administrative centre or as the capital of a small, newly estab-

lished state." Again, a shaky conclusion based on the absence of evidence.

In the tenth or ninth century B.C.E. only about 5,000 people lived in Jerusalem, according to a study by Shiloh and Israeli archaeologist Magen Broshi. Steiner says it was closer to 2,000.

Finally, without qualification, she states: "The United Monarchy is not an historical fact." She bases this conclusion on a comparison of Jerusalem with other contemporaneous sites that have been excavated—Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer and Lachish. All could be capitals of regional states. Therefore, she reasons, Jerusalem was not the capital of the United Monarchy any more than these other towns. Her conclusion, however, once again does not follow from the evidence.

This is an important but disappointing book. Kenyon's excavation of the City of David was the most extensive and significant since the First World War. All who are intrigued by the history of the Holy City must come to terms with the information her excavation has to give us. It is disappointing, however, for several reasons, most of them not Steiner's fault. The major disappointment is that the revered master of archaeological method and technique was, in fact, a poor excavator and record keeper. The emperor (or empress) had clay feet, to coin a phrase.

In many cases, Kenyon also reached erroneous substantive conclusions. Perhaps this is more forgivable. It sometimes seems like the major work of current archaeologists is to point out the errors of their predecessors.


Some of my disappointment comes not from Kenyon's errors, but simply from the nature of her task. In many cases, for example, even experts cannot tell the difference between pottery from the tenth and ninth centuries B.C.E.

Steiner herself is a careful and dedicated scholar. We feel her pain at having to work for nearly 20 years to squeeze so little juice out of the lemon. But she also comes to negative conclusions without due circumspection. She is too ready to say that it—whatever it is—didn't exist just because so little has been found. She admits that much evidence may be under the Temple Mount, which is obviously not available to archaeologists. But, in addition, much of the City of David, almost the entire top of the ridge, remains unexcavated because modern houses stand upon it. To reach the conclusion that there were no domestic dwellings at a certain period in Jerusalem, despite the fact that most of the site remains unexcavated, seems unjustified. In

short, Steiner gives much too much weight to the absence of evidence. As the old aphorism has it, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence—at least not in circumstances like these.

Steiner also has a knack for explaining what evidence there is in such a way as to deny Jerusalem's prominence—for example, her assertion that the mammoth Stepped Stone Structure was built to fill a gully.

Steiner sometimes errs simply because later evidence was unavailable when she wrote this final report. She tries to take account of the evidence from Shiloh's subsequent excavation of the area, but since then Israeli archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron have also dug near the Gihon Spring. Steiner tells us with some certainty, for example, "that the building of Warren's Shaft must be assigned to [Middle Bronze IIB]," while noting that others have assigned it many other dates (Shiloh places it in the tenth/ninth century B.C.E.). Steiner reasons that because the shaft makes the water from the spring (which is outside the city, near the bottom of the slope) accessible from inside the city (by means of an underground tunnel system), the shaft was built at a time when a wall protected the city. What seems like sensible reasoning leads her to the conclusion that the shaft was built in Middle Bronze IIB, when the city was enclosed by a massive wall. But since Steiner wrote her report, Reich and Shukron have shown that Warren's Shaft is a natural karstic chimney that was never used to draw water (though this conclusion is also now disputed). The underground tunnel system at the top of the shaft led not to the shaft, but to towers near the spring. And it was not opened until the eighth century B.C.E.

If you're looking for certainty, stay away from Jerusalem archaeology in general and this book in particular. But if you can't stay away, read and enjoy. It also helps if you like crossword puzzles. 

<sup>1</sup>Kathleen Kenyon, *Jerusalem—Excavating 3,000 Years of History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) and *Digging Up Jerusalem* (New York: Praeger, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>The project also includes this previously published work: H.J. Franken and M.L. Steiner, *Excavations in Jerusalem 1961-1967, vol. 2, The Extramural Quarter on the South-East Hill* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990). Publication of the coins, inscriptions, seals, flint, some closed pottery groups, human and animal bones, shells, stone weights, hammer stones and figurines have been assigned to specialists in these various fields. Most of the work is "still to be done" and little of it is published.

<sup>3</sup>Steiner makes the same kind of argument with the mention of Jerusalem in "Egyptian Exorcism" texts from the 19th or 18th century B.C.E., when, again, Steiner finds no evidence for a settlement at Jerusalem. "The mentioning of this name alone cannot be used as 'proof' that Jerusalem was an important town then, as the name need not specify a town—it could as easily indicate a region or a tribe."

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## Nimrud, Iraq

Grasping an antelope by its horns, and supporting a monkey and a leopard skin on his shoulders, this 5.3-inch-tall ivory figurine from Nimrud, on the Tigris River in northern Iraq, most likely represents a Nubian tribute-bearer. It is carved in the so-called Phoenician style that flourished during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. The figure's straight-backed pose—with both feet pointing to his left—and his kilt-like garment are reminiscent of many Egyptian artworks.

The Nubian figure was discovered in 1960 at Fort Shalmaneser, a palace for reviewing troops built in the southeast corner of the Nimrud site by King Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.). It is one of dozens of beautiful ivories found over the course of successive excavations at Nimrud. Many of these were originally covered with gold leaf or inlaid with semiprecious gems and were used primarily as furniture decorations in the lavish palaces of the Assyrian kings. Yet exactly how they came to Nimrud is not known: Scholars are uncertain whether they were imported as tribute or made by Phoenician craftsmen living in ancient Nimrud.



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